


Vision and Task

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Vision and Task

BY

GEORGE CLARKE PECK



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To those who
for eight years were my parishioners
and are my friends for aye
this volume is
gratefully dedicated

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I

THE PASSING OF MYSTERY

The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.—John xii, 29.

THE PASSING OF MYSTERY

THESE bystanders really had to say something. Under the circumstances it was scarcely possible for them to refrain from comment. The voice from the skies had stirred them variously. By all the traditions of human conduct, under such unusual conditions they were bound to say something. Some of them, therefore, "said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to Him." What difference does it make which thing they said? I may answer that it made a very considerable difference. This was by no means an ordinary occasion. An element mysterious and indescribable was in the air. Some indeterminate trouble was brewing. And dull is the soul which in such moments fails to feel more than it can explain. Gertrude Atherton's *Conqueror* devotes several vivid pages to a description of the West Indian hurricane, one result of which was to send Alexander Hamilton to our shores. Birds acted

strangely. The beasts of stall and field seemed to scent some direful mischief.

Such a day was that on which this dramatic incident occurred. Sensitive souls were oppressed with nameless premonitions. Events were focusing toward some supreme issue. Those who were nearest to Christ in sympathy had a sort of dumb anguish. Palm Sunday was just past; something unnamed was ahead! This Man had just been making extraordinary claims, and had enjoined a tremendous obedience. He had given a glimpse of His own heart and permitted His disciples to feel the pulse of His terrible agony. At such a moment the sky cleft and Heaven added its "amen" to the life and word of Jesus. So, at least, He interpreted the voice from the sky. For concerning it He definitely says, "This voice came not because of me, but *for your sakes.*" Its purpose was to tell men *who* He was.

I know there is a modern spirit which asks what difference it makes *who* He was. This specious spirit is especially loud

and insistent in our day. What difference who He was so long as He was good and kind? Such is the question of Lobestein, of Réville, and a host of lesser lights. Whether He was born of a virgin or was the natural son of Joseph, whether He was divine in any higher sense than that in which all deliverers are divine, whether His inspiration was different in quality from the inspiration of a Shakespeare or a Bacon—what matter so long as He lived a beautiful life and helped the sick and blessed the sorrowing?

What difference does it make who He was? It makes a great deal of difference indeed. This specious, modern sophism has an obverse side. Look at it a moment. When William E. Gladstone climbed a flight of rickety garret stairs to read the Bible to his former crossing sweeper, think you it made no difference to the sick man that his visitor was the premier of England? When Lord Shaftesbury turned from Parliament to seek, like a common missionary, the lost of the great city, shall it be said that the greatness of

the seeker made no difference? When Sir Ralph Abercrombie, wrapped, dying, in a common soldier's blanket, ordered the blanket returned to the soldier that night, did the thoughtfulness of a commander count for nothing extra? A cup of cold water is still a cup of cold water only, when it is borne by a queen to a peasant. But does the disparity of rank make no difference in the gift? We commonly count that it makes a vast difference. Not only does the gift glorify the hand; the hand may glorify the gift. It is the stoop which counts.

So with the Man of Nazareth. His gentleness and patience would still remain were He merely what agnostic writers admit Him to be. His supreme service to mankind would still "crown Him with many crowns." But when, in addition to all this, He is the revelation of the Father, and His pity is the veritable stoop of God; when all His intimate dealings with men symbolize the intimacy of heaven with earth—what then? It *did* make a difference. It *continues* to make a dif-

ference. And this was the difference declared by the parted heavens and the testimony of the sky. The unusual voice was designed to help the hearers appraise the rank of Jesus. It was an unique witness to the Son of God. But see what happened. Some of the people that stood by "said that it thundered." Even after such special demonstration they were still unconvinced. So little were they impressed with the occasion and the Man, that the voice from heaven was declared to be merely a clap of ordinary thunder. A few, to be sure, did admit that an angel had spoken. But the company as a whole missed the lesson of the hour. Utterly unwilling to grant heaven's interest in earth; afraid to permit life to assume aspects of a rich solemnity; preferring to say that nature had groaned than that God had spoken—this was their mood.

I scarcely need allege that the spirit is quite modern also. We are in imminent danger to-day of having everything explained. Nothing in life or death, nothing here or hereafter, is permitted to

remain mysterious. Naturalism is exasperatingly ready with a formula for every phenomenon. People used to feel that on certain holy territory they must pause unsandaled; now they need go nowhere abashed. They used to confess that God had spoken; now, if He speaks, they say that "it thundered." It is an age of pitiless, heart-breaking naturalism. The heavens may be open never so wide, and God may wondrously speak—multitudes will only admit that "it thundered."

But let me pause to make a generous admission before we pass on with this thought. I am glad to acknowledge the debt of our age to science. God forbid that the pulpit should ever discount the work of the laboratory and the telescope. I would join hands with all freethinkers long enough to bless science for the sanity and light she has brought to men. There have been days when men did not need parted skies to make them believe that God had spoken. If a door creaked unaccountably, if some poor dog howled inauspiciously, if the salt was spilled on

the cloth, God was doubtless trying to say something. There was no "thunder" at all; it was always God speaking. And we may be grateful that we live late enough to be largely beyond such superstitious ranges. We only smile at John Wesley's laborious explanation of earthquake and pestilence. Farewell has been said to a host of unhealthy notions. The light of common sense has been let in upon a whole throng of spooks and hobgoblins. No intelligent Christian feels called upon to imagine God is angry every time the winds get loose and smash things up. Vesuvius may fume and shudder without implicating an angry Creator. We *can* "bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades," which Job said could not be done. We expect the Almighty to keep His temper in the face of men's disobedience and folly. We have rational explanations of a thousand puzzling phenomena. In short, we have learned the difference between God speaking and the "thunder."

And just here is also our greatest point

of danger, that we shall think that everything is thunder and that there is no Voice at all. We have rationalized the universe so far that we have nearly done its charm to death. This planing out of all mystery, this reduction of all phenomena to the bald terms of matter and motion has only one issue—pessimism. Haeckel has well named his book *The Riddle of the Universe*. “He has found everything out. He has probed all the old mystery and found it a bag stuffed with sawdust. There is nothing to wonder at in its suns and systems.” Yet, as a matter of fact, the universe with all its mystery explained is a worse riddle still.

“Great God! I’d rather be
A pagan, suckled on a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.”

So confessed William Wordsworth, and so some of us are still confessing. Better a thousand times that we should have some mystery left. Better, even, that there

should be residuary traces of what the world calls superstition than that we should lose the piquancy of the unexplained. It is immensely important that the human heart should hear God speak. We cannot afford to dismiss His utterances by saying that "it thundered."

You will have reminded yourselves, already, of certain natural applications of this suggestion. First, to the world around us. I was brought up to believe that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." But modern materialism says the heavens declare nothing of the sort, and the firmament showeth merely a fortuitous concourse of atoms. I was brought up to look at the stars and think of them as

"Forever singing as they shine,
'The Hand that made us is divine.'"

But Lalande says such sentiment is not even good poetry. It is stuff and folderol. Stars do not sing at all. And it is a remnant of barbaric days to talk about a "creator" of stars. Jesus once asserted that

if we should "consider the lilies of the field" we should learn things about the "Father in heaven." But such modern writers as Büchner insist that we may "consider the lilies" all we please and we shall never learn lessons of anything beyond them. This is evidently the spirit which Wordsworth had encountered when he wrote:

"A primrose by a river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

Of the same sort of spirit the same reverent poet also said:

"The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart."

It is only too pitifully obvious that we have lost the speaking angel. The open skies have said nothing worth listening to. Their utterance is merely thunder.

Great is the catastrophe of the son of God who espouses such a creed. Here is pity for any lover of nature who has not found the God of nature. More fortunate, in this respect, the pagan who finds in every flower a voice, and who takes

off his hat under the stars as if in the presence of the Infinite. It was part of the joy of Kepler's quest that he was simply rethinking God's thoughts. Triumphant he confesses "the God whom I find *everywhere*." To find Him everywhere; to decipher that marvelous language which is "on every creature writ"; to know the divine voice so well that we shall never again make the mistake of calling it thunder, is one of the marks that we have grown.

Most of us need the same warning in our study of history. I was brought up to believe that God spoke at Waterloo, at Yorktown, at Appomattox. I learned reverence for the makers of history as for the deputies of the King of kings. I thought that Moses and Daniel, David and Maccabæus, Aurelius, Martel, and Lincoln were about God's business. But I have since become acquainted with a modern creed which declares all such notions absurd. According to this new gospel, history is not really a movement toward anything. It is not even a pro-

cession: it is merely a "fortuitous con-course of atoms." God knows what it is except that with heartless purpose it grinds out human destinies. God never really speaks in history. All that we hear is the "thunder" of pitiless ages, the crowding and jostling of hordes of men. It was in this sense, perhaps, that Margaret Fuller declared, "I accept the universe." The best that Voltaire could say was this: "Thank God, I can look on the world as a farce, even when it becomes as tragic as it sometimes does. It all comes out even at the end of the day. And it all comes out still more even when all the days are over." For him there was nothing but thunder. God has no speech plain enough, I suppose, to convince some of His children. Vainly does He continue to call. His most significant word makes little impression. The hearers are simply incased in their own sciolism.

Ah, but I believe history tells something more than a huddle or heedless drift of events. The story of man has been punc-

tuated by God. Even so hard a scoffer as Gibbon was once frank enough to admit that "even in this world the natural order of events will sometimes afford strong appearances of moral retribution." A reverent spirit will find the collisions and catastrophes of history serving somewhat besides the trifling or sinister purposes of men. There is One who has a higher stake in human events than have generals and politicians. Something is ripening. Man is moving toward a "consummation."

"For I wot that through the ages
One unceasing purpose runs."

It will be hard to explain away all the hints that God is giving. He has spoken. Paul was sure that he had heard Him. So were Seneca and Luther and Napoleon. So were Gladstone and Bismarck and Lincoln. And so are some of us.

There are so many more applications of this truth one hardly knows which to choose. I might suggest its bearing upon the Bible. We live in a critical age in which the Bible has all been explained.

Its growth, its limitations, its errors have been learnedly declared. Many who read it hear only "thunder." But for the attentive soul it still speaks. Coleridge had heard it when he said he knew the Bible to be divine because it found him at the greatest depth of his being.

Or upon human life. We have dismissed too many sentiments. We have let go too many high callings. We have come down into an interminable plane of mechanics and logic. Everything has been explained. A mother's love, the existence of our ideals, the genius of a Beethoven—all these have been reduced to the lowest terms of matter and motion. God forgive us that we have left so little place for the open heavens and the higher voices!

Just one further application of the text I want to make emphatic. We are in danger of losing God's personal word in conscience. Paul thought that God had spoken to him. He spent the rest of his life under the compulsion of a tremendous "ought." But modern medico-materialism says that his vision was only a "dis-

charging lesion of the occipital cortex." George Fox thought he had heard God speak against the shams of the age; modern science says that Fox was merely troubled with a disordered colon. Thomas Carlyle felt that God had inspired the organ tones of his complaint. But modern thought says that he was afflicted with duodenal catarrh. We are not so learned in phrases, but we have a way of explaining away duty. Nietzsche thought the kingdom would come in when men got rid of the idea of obligation. Sometimes a great scruple comes to a man; sometimes a sense of commission; sometimes a consciousness of guilt. We used to think that God was speaking in such moods. *I think so still.* Let us not be tricked into explaining away these voices. When God speaks it is worth while to listen. To hear Him in conscience; to recognize His utterance in the dictates and intuitions of a higher selfhood; to be conscious of the Father in the suggestions of a brooding Spirit, is the beginning of earnest living.

II
THE HIGHEST VOCATION

Called to be saints.—Rom. i, 7.

THE HIGHEST VOCATION

IN the list of human achievements Paul puts spirituality at the top. He repeatedly pays homage to it. His ideal man is the spiritual man. He was persuaded that the kingdom of God would come only with human gains in spirituality. And after nineteen centuries the word is still descriptive of the kind of manhood and womanhood the church must help produce. Taking our cue from the great apostle to the Gentiles, and gathering emphasis from many passages of Scripture and from the plain facts of human experience, we are still bold to assert that spirituality is an uppermost human quality, the unique mark of complete manhood.

In terms of this very word we are untiringly told what ails the church; where the reason for its failures must be sought; which way lies the path of power. Every evangelist accredited and unaccredited rings the changes on the word. Now and again a busy pastor or devoted Chris-

tian worker comes forth from some cloister of communion, with this word as a "pearl of great price." A spiritual church; a spiritually minded membership; growth in spiritual perception and quality—in terms of these things we have the greatest declared need of the church.

Notwithstanding all which assertion and asseveration the word itself is under the ban of suspicion. For while the church insists that the first thing men ought to seek is spirituality, the world is persuaded that the last thing it wants to be is spiritual. The average man is not only not "hungering and thirsting" after holiness, he is really afraid of it. He almost prays to be delivered from it. He is by no means convinced that it offers an additional asset to his life. Otherworldliness has not commended itself to ordinary mortals. They have somehow learned to associate spirituality with a sort of gross and pathetic egotism; with a morose and maudlin introspection; with the absence of the hardier and more catholic qualities of human nature.

And I may add that the unchurched member of the community does not stand alone in his suspicion as to the general wisdom and genuine value of the much-bepraised spirituality. Many very estimable members of the church look only sidewise at the doctrine. Nor are these persons necessarily, or even usually, the "poor trash" of the church. I believe that certain of our members, who by every fundamental test are truly spiritual; men who walk with God as assuredly as ever Enoch did; women who bear in their lives "the marks of the Lord Jesus," feel a sort of revulsion from the doctrine of spirituality as ordinarily preached. Such is the obvious situation: the church calling with more or less distinctness for people to be spiritual, and the majority of people replying with more or less frankness that they beg to be excused. What is the trouble? Who is to blame? Which is the way out?

It is very easy to dispose of the whole matter by insisting that the "carnal mind" shows its "enmity against God" by de-

clining to heed the call to spirituality. It is often said that we shamelessly confess our depths of iniquity and our frozen consciences when we start and stagger at the Lord's requirements. This is a simple solution of the whole matter. I have, however, grown a trifle suspicious of all such easy, wholesale methods of disposing of life problems. The handiest explanation may explain least. One of the suggestive methods employed by textual critics of the Bible is, in the case of variant readings, to adopt the more difficult. Their theory is that error crept into the sacred text by mistaking the obscure for the obvious, by substituting a simple word or phrase for a less familiar one. Hence the original text can only be reached by reversing the process. The simplest explanation may be least valid. It is as unsafe to assume that the minority *must* be *right* as to assume that the minority *must* be *wrong*. Majorities settle nothing finally. Nothing is really settled until it is settled right. In our "zeal of the Lord's house" let us not fall to

the reprehensible and cowardly level of calling names.

Equally simple and still more pernicious is the other disposition of the dilemma. It is the prescription of worldly wisdom. Let the church quit preaching spirituality and come down into the plain of ordinary conduct; let us be rid of the friction by stopping the wheels. Such is the cry of arrogant unbelief and of abject materialism. To give up a sort of strained saintliness and settle down into comfortable sinning would be the world's solution of the problem. As well relinquish "pitch" in the orchestra because an occasional violin breaks a string! as well surrender the ideals of art on the ground that most artists are put-terers! as well shut the doors of the Hague tribunal because the nations are still building warships! We can by no means abandon the idea of spiritual manhood. By the Master's unequivocal teaching; by the lustrous lives of centuries of saints; by the holiest considerations of the human heart, we are committed to

insist upon spirituality. It is of the genius of the only gospel we are authorized to preach. Holy manhood is indeed the only complete, the only symmetric, manhood. Cut out that mysterious, half-mystic something which for lack of a better name we have called spirituality; let the church become merely a congregation, a club, a society, and our unique mission is lost, our glory departed.

So the dilemma remains: the church calling, and the "called" refusing to obey. What then? Is it not possible that we have blundered in our distinctions? that we have distorted the thing we are talking about? Suppose, notwithstanding all sincerity of purpose, we have presented spirituality as an altogether one-sided attainment, a sort of dubious human advantage, a caricature of perfected manhood. What concerns us, at bottom, is not form but substance, not the statement but the thing. When a gun refuses to go off we do not throw the gun away; we try another shell. Let the ship go down, but save the freight. The "letter"

always "killeth." What if we have been more concerned with the letter than with the spirit of holiness?

Let us look frankly, then, at some of the things which spirituality has been supposed to be and as certainly is not. In a scalding indictment of the monks, Erasmus said of them that they considered illiteracy a sign of holiness: the less they knew of human wisdom the more they thought they knew the "mind of the Spirit." I was about half through my Seminary course when a Presiding Elder besought me to leave scholastic halls and take a parish—this on the ground that further study would put in jeopardy any spirituality I might be supposed to possess. I have heard it solemnly affirmed that no minister should spend much time in his study except, perhaps, on his knees; that the best sermons generate spontaneously, are born full-sized, rise without scaffolding. Preachers have even boasted of proving their prophetic grade by going into the pulpit with an open mouth and waiting for God to fill it. They would

not clutter the Spirit's path by profane learning. They gave God not only the "right of way," but the whole road. I could name young people who have been dissuaded from taking a collegiate course by the luridly painted perils of "much learning." As if that were essential spirituality which sits at home and counts its beads or even ponders the Bible! God pity us if men can be religious only by shutting their eyes and mocking some of the soul's deepest voices! How shall we ever expect to win eager spirits with such a doctrine?

Or, on the principle of asceticism, either! What vast armies of able-bodied men and women have retreated from the firing line of active duty and given themselves to fasts and macerations! I hate to think of the manhood which has been practically buried within monastic walls; of the time wasted in repetition of prayers and creeds, of paternosters and Hail Marys, of chants and invocations—time which ought to have been employed in the service of humankind. "What good

to God or man? How weary heaven must be, if earth is not, of the everlasting repetition! If this is spirituality, the world with the best intentions could certainly not afford to be spiritual at the price." Such, indeed, is the meaning of the sometime rejoinder of certain folks to whom I preach. They declare they have not time to be religious. There is so much housework and bread-winning to be done they cannot afford to cultivate the beauty of holiness. It is perfectly apparent what is in their minds. They are thinking of a religiosity which involves leaving the beds unmade and the children to hired kindness, while it hurries off to a convention for the deepening of the spiritual life. They imagine, as we have sometimes seemed to intimate, that deep piety must cut the nerve of practical enterprise and send men mooning and moping when they ought to be swinging the sledge or transacting business. Let us be frank. If the reciting of prayers and the cultivation of ecstatic states be the best ideal of sanctity, a worse misfortune could scarcely befall

than for a whole world to adopt that ideal. "*You* be religious and *I* will earn money to support you," said a man to his brother. He was right if his brother was right.

Nor is our definition of spirituality much improved when we carry it up into the realm of special rapture and religious ecstasy. Raptures at best are unstable things. A man can never be quite sure what mood his rapture will break off into. An ancient and famous churchman has left on record a list of marvelous exaltations of spirit and of frightful amours and murders. In the Castle of Saint Angelo he was a saint; outside he was nearly a villain. I remember the case of a young man who, during the progress of a certain meeting which I was conducting, seemed seized by a spirit hand and "caught up into heaven." His face fairly shone, and he spoke "with the tongues of men and angels." I was greatly impressed. I confess to a sort of awe in his presence. But next day the mood had passed and he relapsed into his old indifference. I doubt if anyone can be said to enjoy reli-

gion more keenly than does the negro. Enjoyment becomes a perfect frenzy with him. His excitement runs all the way up to ecstasy. Yet it may be necessary to lock the henroosts which he passes on the way home from meeting.

Let me take no shade of glory from the rapturous experiences of the soul; I only insist that they are not the essence of spirituality. Else a throng of folk would be denied the privilege of being spiritual. I believe that certain natures are totally incapable of ecstatic devotional moods. As well require all men to revel in music or pictures. We may be sorry for their disqualification. The coloring of Rembrandt and the chordings of Liszt remain real even in the presence of æsthetic dullness of apprehension. Nothing is discredited. But we at least are warned against attempting to grade men by their æsthetic raptures, or the want of them. Let us be equally sane in the realm of religion. Who shall shut the door of the kingdom of spirituality against the colder, but not less worthy, souls?

Even Puritanism, which for three hundred years has stood for a vital piety, has at every moment been in danger of losing the essence in the form. Students of history will recall the terrible reaction which followed Cromwell's days. His own sons made little pretense of being religious. The nephews of John Milton, educated in his own household, wrote satires against Puritanism and published obscene songs. Daughters of some of the greatest Puritan preachers gave themselves to the stage and worse. Such was the inevitable reaction of a one-sided piety. God is greater than the Puritan conception of Him: life is sweeter and more human than those stalwart old pietists dared to imagine. Even our own beloved Methodism has been too often considered an exclusive factory for the turning out of spiritual religion. An ingrowing thing is always painful, whether it be a nail or a man's religion.

What, then, is left? Granting that the essence of spirituality is to be found neither in pose of head nor in style of dress;

neither in sets of phrases nor in familiarity with the Scriptures; neither in the drawl of the old-fashioned Baptist, nor in the tearful unction of the modern revivalist, what, then, is spirituality? What is it to be spiritual? Spirituality is everything it ever was. Holiness is too beautiful and vital a quality to be tied to forms and styles. It is the watermark of the finest character. The spiritualized man is the complete man. Whether in the pulpit or on the street; whether for farmer or scientist, to be spiritual is to be one's whole self. Spirituality is not the shutting off of a part of the house and living in the remainder. It is the opening of wider windows into every room of life. It is the cutting of easier doors of egress to all activity. Let it never be made the exclusive privilege of the few who have time to spare. It must be taught as a universal accomplishment or nothing.

Let me try, then, to tell what it is. Spirituality is both vision and virtue; it is both a mood of the soul and a movement of the life. To be spiritual is to

perceive God in His world. To become conscious of His presence; to hear His voice in all music, whether the trill of the lark or the music of the spheres; to see His face mirrored in every lake and in every helpful institution; to feel the beatings of His heart in the arteries of universal history and in the facts of personal life—this is to be “spiritually minded.” It is because the Bible helps us to do this that one should read the Bible. It is because prayer puts us in the mood of such perception that we should pray. It is because the church helps to this attitude of spirit that we should “forsake not the assembling of ourselves together.” It is because meditation hushes the soul to that calm in which God speaks that we should cultivate the quiet hour. No man has really lived until he has had a sense of the presence of God.

But this is not the whole of spirituality. Vision must lead to virtue. Peter must come down from the housetop to meet the three men who seek him. The spiritual man is the man who tries to live most

largely ; to keep all the laws of his being ; to fulfill the best that is in him. Obedience to the Divine Spirit is the second test of spirituality. Whether to write a book or try a case ; to produce a better machine or to make an inspiring prayer ; to watch by the sick or to help a soul into the light, must be made part of the spiritual life. Shall we imagine that God loves firemen less than He loves missionaries ? Does He necessarily prefer Sunday school teachers to devoted physicians ? I cannot think so. As matter of fact, the engineer in his cab, with his hand on the throttle and his eye down the gleaming rails, may be more spiritual than the priest at his altar or the penitent on his knees, and may more validly serve the kingdom. God needs all kinds of servants and helpers. He asks that they print their devotion in letters of light and service ; that their piety be translated into the idiom of daily life. The finest thing in the world is manhood spiritualized for the uses of a busy world.

III

THE PLAIN HEROIC BREED

And Andrew his brother.—Matt. x, 2.

THE PLAIN HEROIC BREED

CLOSE kinship with a popular hero is by no means an unmixed blessing. Over against the obvious advantages of such relationship lies the certainty of invidious comparison and distinction. The white light which beats upon every throne of fame, disclosing its blemishes, reveals also the terrible mediocrity around the throne. Under certain circumstances, it is a real misfortune to be the brother or intimate of a famous man. Many a fine soul has been quenched by such eclipse. Had he not happened to stand so close to some towering figure he might have been admired and loved for himself.

Apropos of the death of Count Bismarck, recently, one of the papers observed that "few realized that the Iron Chancellor had left a son." Yet Herbert Bismarck was by no means an inferior sort of man. Had he been the son of a merchant or mechanic he might probably have been ranked high among his fellows. Because he happened to be the son of a

man of heroic mold, and failed to measure up to that towering standard, he seemed in these latter days a sort of nobody. He was lost in the crowd of lesser notables. By the tragedy of his death the world had to be reminded that he had lived.

The plight of the homely sister is almost pathetic. She is fairly cursed by contrast. Under some skies she might shine, but she pales by comparison. Nor can she seem to escape it. She is haunted and stung by a sense of inferiority in face and person. It barely escapes being a pity that Jerome Bonaparte was born of the same mother with Napoleon. Never should we have realized so keenly the administrative deficiencies of Constans and Constantius had they not been in the direct order of succession to Constantine the Great. The same stroke of fortune which singled out one son of Jesse to make him famous made the others appear ignoble. Thus the world is full of apparent smother; of lives paled by comparison; of fidelity eclipsed by brilliancy; of real sturdiness and sacrifice lost sight

of amid the dazzle of more brilliant personal endowments.

Andrew is such a man. The Church has never known or cared very much about him, except, in a sort of latter-day inspiration, to call a Brotherhood after him. His name had been perpetuated, chiefly, by the fame of the more celebrated brother. The catalogue of the apostles in Matthew's gospel epitomizes the whole situation: "Simon Peter, *and Andrew his brother.*" Andrew would never have been mentioned so near the head of the list except for the convenience of identification and classifying. He was simply "the brother of Simon Peter." As such the world has been pleased to remember him. He has been granted an honorable niche over against that of his brother in the world's temple of fame; not because Andrew was Andrew, but because Peter was Peter and Andrew was his brother.

All of which is as manifestly unfair to the facts as such spirit commonly is. Andrew is very far from being a nonentity. Granted that he lacks somewhat of his

brother's dash and fervor, he is lacking, also, the shame and falsehood which attach to the other's name. Andrew is the sort of man of whose type the world needs a multitude. He is ballast for the head-sail which Peter carries. He is the solid bottom of every society and organization. He is indispensable to the church. He does not turn the world upside down. He helps keep it right side up, or turn it back when Peter has incontinently turned it upside down. After all the deserved praise that belongs to Peter, no church can be built out of such. Andrew is far safer material for the average disciple. He carries less fireworks and therefore less danger. Faithful at the smaller tasks of life; brave in out-of-the-way places; devoted without a daily diet of praise; winning victories without hoisting a flag over them; willing to be "a hewer of wood and a drawer of water" if need be; never brilliant but always on hand—such is Andrew.

And, be it observed, we constantly pay tribute to the Andrews of society. You

will easily recall the wave of public horror which swept over the land at the cowardice of that infamous deckhand on the Slocum. He is not easily forgotten. He has been held up to public execration by a thousand papers. But why? He merely tried to save himself. Surely the deck of a common vessel is a queer place to hunt for a great unselfishness. Yet there is just where we expect to find it. We commonly look for a sort of supreme fidelity as the natural accompaniment of Andrew's station. We are not greatly impressed, ordinarily, when a locomotive engineer goes over an embankment with his engine, or holds his hand to the throttle when he might jump and save his life. To be sure, we read the next morning's newspaper account with a certain mild-eyed admiration, but we are not nearly so astonished at such display of heroism as we should have been had the man turned craven. And why, except that we expect common clay to become supremely heroic upon occasion?

What a beautiful list of "heroisms in

homespun" might be made from one week's news items. Such splendid blossoms seem to grow best in common soil. Not to Peter, but to Andrew, does the world look for everyday glory. Peter swore he would be the last, yet he was the first, to forsake his Master. He meant to be true, but his ardor chilled. Somehow Peter, with all his ebullition of fine feeling, could never be depended upon. He is not the man in whom the church takes comfort. One has to watch him, as a weathervane, to see if the wind of his mood has changed. But his unemotional brother, the plain, laborious, unadvertised Andrew, is the strength of the community and the church.

I was somewhat disappointed and chagrined at the size of the driving wheels on the engine which drew our train over the Sierras last summer. Just the day before I had been admiring the eight-foot drivers which carried us from Omaha a thousand miles westward, at nearly sixty miles an hour. I somehow felt that the power and greatness of the engine were

resident in its immense wheels. And when, at Ogden, a much less pretentious engine with more but smaller wheels was backed on to the train, I had a sense of contempt. I thought that was probably the scale on which things were done out West. But I learned a lesson. The huge drivers would have balked before the train had gone a mile up the mountains. The small wheels did the work. Big wheels for speed, but small wheels and plenty of them for the hard pull of the work of the church.

“One feast of holy days the crest,
I, though no churchman, love to keep:
All-Saints’—the unknown good that rest
In God’s still memory folded deep;
The bravely dumb that did their deed,
And scorned to blot it with a name;
Men of the plain, heroic breed,
That loved Heaven’s silence more than fame.”

It is of these lesser lights, of these kinsmen of greatness, of the ordinary man with his two talents; “of the might of mediocrity”; of the “thunder” of silent fidelity,” that I want specially to speak.

Such is the breed of Andrew. I am

not romancing about him. The man described is here in the Book. He may be easily identified by the features in his picture. Little did he guess that he was being photographed for future ages. There is no dress-up or prearranged neck-cloth in the likeness. The camera caught him just as he was. He is simply Andrew—a beautiful model for the brotherhood of everyday life. Four snapshots of him are all we have. Let me, then, hold up each of the four.

In the first of these photographs Andrew is leading his more famous brother to Jesus. That he employed any particular art of persuasion does not appear. It is doubtful if Andrew was the sort of man the world calls gifted. He would have been utterly incapable of preaching a crusade or of inaugurating a great reform, except in his own heart. He never could have delivered such a sermon as Peter's at Pentecost. But somehow he won the man who preached the sermon. He knew what he could do and he did what he could. He persuaded his

brother, and he has to all subsequent ages a unique, "far-off interest" in the work of a greater than himself. Talk of Andrew's not being heard of except for Peter! Peter might not have been known except for Andrew, and that Andrew "brought him to Jesus."

Thus, I believe, the world runs. The greatest spirit is often led up to its mission by the humblest hand. What of Abraham Lincoln but for the investment in him of Nancy Hanks? He really rose on her shoulders to his commanding place in history. Such—until the advent of the new woman—was supposed to be the unique glory of womanhood, to prepare and qualify another spirit, to speak by another mouth.

But the principle is wider than motherhood. Cicero built a monument to the slave who had helped him in his study. The world might have included no Wendell Phillips but for the martyrdom of the obscure Lovejoy. It was a humble Moravian missionary, the story of whose immolation for the sake of the black man

fired Wilberforce's soul and set him thundering against slavery. Henry Ward Beecher never tired of paying tribute to the little schoolmistress up in the Connecticut hills who had done so much to mold his manhood. How many humble souls have been the teachers of the celebrated! What uncultured hands have shaped the clay of human greatness! How often the princes of men have been led into their kingdom by the timidest hands!

This is the supreme thing which Andrew did—led Peter into the kingdom. He brought his brother to Jesus. Had he done nothing else, he had richly lived. The greatest service ever done by one soul to another is to lead that soul into the presence of its Master. The papers have recently paid tribute to a wealthy New York woman who is spending thousands of dollars on the musical education of a child of the slums. Entirely by accident her attention was called to the marvelous voice of the child. Now she has sent the child abroad to study under the greatest living vocal teachers. She is helping that

voice to find its master. But greater than the ministry of helping a voice to find its master is the ministry of helping a heart to find its Saviour. That is what Andrew did—he brought Peter to Jesus.

The second photograph of Andrew gives us a glimpse of a man at a humble task when destiny knocked at his door. He was toiling at the nets when Jesus called to other service. Andrew had no higher creed than that of fidelity to nearest duty. In his case, that duty meant boats and nets. And Jesus came to him at just such ordinary tasks.

I believe in daydreams, but I do not believe in dreams that unfit one for work. Visions in ascending steam; voices in hammer and lathe; rendings of the veil for the soul at its task—these are our warrant. The door of larger usefulness opens at the threshold of some well-performed duty. God trusts the work of the kingdom to hands already trained in fidelity. So far as I know, there was not an idle man among the twelve. Jesus chose busy men to be preachers of an earnest right-

eousness. He grafted the new vocation into the stock of an old usefulness. Faithful fishermen were the right sort of material to make successful fishers of men.

I distinctly remember my boyish anxiety to get into the second reader. Before I had half finished the first reader I was longing to have the second. I have since learned that no ordinary lad could properly use a second reader until he had mastered the first. All of which is a parable on duty. God promotes the scholars who have been faithful to tasks assigned. In some new trust He pays interest on fidelity. I have often noticed that idle people never have any time to spare. If I want something done I ask the busiest man to attend to it. Most of the work of the Church is done by the hardest-worked people. In all of which there is a deep philosophy. God's work is not safe in empty hands. His supreme call comes not to idlers, but to toilers.

The third photograph of Andrew was taken at the time of the feeding of the multitude. Jesus asked the disciples what

contribution they could make toward supplying the hungry throng. The report was hopeless. But Andrew brought this suggestive word: "There is a lad here which hath five loaves and two small fishes." But for Andrew, so far as the disciples were concerned, the multitude might have gone away hungry. Blessed be the Andrews who are to be found when they are needed. Genius is in danger of living in the clouds; of losing the individual in the mass. Andrew always knows the individual; has a personal touch on hearts; keeps an inventory of even the last basket. Here has always been the success of the so-called family physician. He is rarely famous. His opinion would scarcely be sought on any disputed point of medicine or surgery, but he knows the individual members of the family, and his particular prescription is backed by personal acquaintance with the physical idiosyncrasies of each person in the house.

What was it but this which, added to vital piety, made the old-time class leader. We are bemoaning his loss and vaguely

wondering what happened. The plain fact is that we have lost his kind. He was leader for individual hearts. He not only met his class members once a week at a sort of spiritual clinic; he carried them around on his heart. He went into their homes as an intimate friend. He knew their special agonies and yearnings. He did not prescribe for the race; he practiced on a few individuals. He was skilled in the cure of souls *one at a time*.

In the neglect of this particular truth may be found one reason for the inefficiency of the modern pulpit. We have put too much reliance on pulpit pyrotechnics. It is no doubt true that people generally enjoy fireworks. Pain's "Carnival" is crowded year after year. Nevertheless, few folks would take their heartaches and struggles to such a place—except to forget. They would scarcely find comfort or the drying of tears. They need the warmth of another heart against their own. They crave the confessional of friendship. They want the heart's-ease of Andrew's presence. Peter, after Pente-

cost, was in danger of adopting the wholesale method, of trusting to machinery for results. Andrew still toiled by hand.

The fourth and only remaining picture of Andrew shows him turning to Jesus with the petition of another. Certain Greeks who had come up to the feast said to Philip, "we would see Jesus." Philip told Andrew—that was *news*; Andrew told Jesus—that was *evangelism*. Andrew became a voice for the needs of others. Very likely he did not know what else to do. At any rate, he "came and told Jesus." He became a voice for other hearts. John Huss was such a voice for the enslaved spirits of the dark ages. John Howard was such a voice for the victims of prison and disease. George Peabody was such a voice for the stifled dwellers in London tenements. Thank God, there are such voices to-day! May we attain to that—become the mouthpiece of the oppressed, the hurt, the sinning! To be that is to be an Andrew for the twentieth century.



IV

A VISION FOR THE WILDERNESS

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well
of water.—Gen. xxi, 19.

A VISION FOR THE WILDERNESS

THE past made the present harder to bear. To be cast out in the earlier years would not have seemed quite so bitter. For Hagar had been merely a slave, expecting nothing and hoping drearily. Any sort of treatment, whether a lash or a caress, must suffice for a slave. But Hagar, the once Egyptian bondswoman, had lain in Abraham's arms. She had been given him by the age-stricken Sarah, with the express hope of bearing the patriarch a child. And in the course of time she had put into Abraham's arms his first-born. She would have been almost more than human if she could have quenched her rising pride. We easily get acclimated to higher levels. The sense of intimacy with new privilege, the taste of freedom, the thrill of real achievement, are, for most of us, an intoxicating cup.

So with Hagar. Privilege made her proud, and pride yielded exile for her and her child. For Sarah was human,

too. After the first glow of success was over she cordially hated the success of her own scheme. To be subjected to the presence of an arrogant, pretentious slave, to be twitted with her own physical inability, was more than she could bear. And when Ishmael grew old enough to sneer the mischief was done. Mother and lad must go. If we add the supposition of an English expositor that Isaac, the son of Sarah's old age, was a cripple or a partial invalid, while Ishmael, her husband's child but not her own, was strong-limbed and vigorous, the story is complete. Such conditions were fairly calculated to produce a terrific combustion of anger in Sarah's heart. One day that fury burst. Sarah was beside herself with hate. She overbore Abraham's appeal and protest, rode down his love for his own son. The patriarchal roof was declared not broad enough to shelter the two boys, her son and Hagar's. The woman made terms, as she nearly always does. Hagar and Ishmael must go. And go they did. From plenty to poverty;

from the glow of the patriarchal hearth to the chill of the moorland; from Abraham's arms to the loneliness of the stars at night, the bondwoman went all the way with her child. It was in any case a direful experience, but its woe was immeasurably increased by the sense of contrast. The memory of former comfort ground in the sense of misery, and made it burn.

The coming-down process is always heart-breaking. Only great hearts can accept it gracefully. Defeat is worse than original misery. Just here is the nerve of discontent to a host of people. They have had to "come down." They never succeed in forgetting that "mother was a McGrill." To have been always pinched and poor were bad enough, but the pathos of present poverty is often intensified by the memory of former affluence. It is not the mere sight of shabby chairs and well-worn furnishings which makes a woman's face blaze with chagrin: it is the memory of the day when the furniture was new and the horn of plenty was

full. Pride is thrice hurt when it cannot forget.

Here also is part of the problem of lifting the man who is down. He has fallen so far; he remembers with such acute pain; his shame is so heightened by the contrast of past and present, that he has no heart to begin the long upward struggle. It meant increased misery to the prodigal when he came to himself and realized how far he had wandered. The very servants in his father's house had "bread enough and to spare, while he perished with hunger." The pity of the contrast brought him home. But it has driven many a prodigal farther away. Few of the men who beg bread at our doors and drift into the rescue missions of our great cities were born in beggary. Some of them have wandered all the way from fine homes; from classic university halls; from places of honor among men. They were once on the crest of the social wave. "Remember whence thou art fallen," says the angel in Revelation to a backslidden church. But the remedy is

heroic. It is sometimes agony to "remember." The memory of whence one has fallen may easily be tinged with despair. It shows the long, weary climb back. No soul is so helpless in the grapple with misfortune as the soul that has fallen a long way. Such is the case with those whose exaltation has been for the briefest seasons. It is astonishing how soon one gets used to ease and affluence. Let him be lifted up for one season; let the citizen enjoy for a single term the glory and emoluments of office; let a woman be able to purchase one winter's wardrobe on Fifth Avenue, and the return to lowliness is little short of tragedy.

All this, and more, perhaps, was in Hagar's soul as she turned her face toward the desert. What she was leaving made the wilderness more hopeless. The backward glance nearly turned her to stone. But, true to the noblest instinct of motherhood, the edge of her agony lay not in her own suffering, but in the suffering of her child. It was not death for herself which she feared, it was death for the

boy. There is no word to intimate that she even realized how faint and far spent she was. It was anguish for the flesh of her flesh which tore her asunder. For his sake she remembered the well beside Abraham's door. Thus the long hours wore pitilessly on, and when at length it seemed that the end was surely near, she laid the lad under the precarious shade of some near-by shrubbery, and withdrew herself "as it were a bowshot," that she might not see his last struggle for breath. And as she waited she prayed!

This, however, was not the finale of the drama. The wilderness held somewhat beside physical suffering and torment of spirit. It did for Moses. It was in the wilderness that he came upon the burning bush and received his supreme commission. It was in the wilderness that Elijah prayed to die and ravens spread for him a table and God spoke to His despondent child. It was in the wilderness that Jesus struggled for His victory, "and angels came and ministered unto Him." I may say that the wilderness

has taught man the choicest secrets he has ever learned. Mystic words which never would have been heard amid the din of daily life; luminous moments which rarely flash out of the ordinary routine; openings of soul worth all privation and pain—these oftenest come in desert places. I deem it doubtful if Matheson, the famous English preacher, could see so much except that he has long wandered in the wilderness of physical blindness. It is doubtful if John Bunyan could have written *Pilgrim's Progress* outside of Bedford jail. It was exile which helped Seneca give to the world his profoundest philosophy. Loneliness and pain and a slave birth taught Epictetus priceless lessons. "Let then the shadows lie, and the perspective of the light still deepen beyond our view; else while we walk together our hearts will never burn within us by the way, and the darkness as it falls will deliver us into no hand that is divine."

But see what the wilderness held for Hagar. First, the personal presence and ministry of God. Abraham's door was

shut against her, but Abraham's God waited for her whither she went. Man's ostracism is doubtless cruel, but it can never be made complete. There have been days in which the church was pleased to think she could shut and bolt against the heretic and disobedient the doors of the kingdom of heaven. She called it excommunication. The excommunicate person had no right which men or angels were bound to respect. And presumably it was no use to turn to God. His heart was counted as adamant as Pope's or Bishop's. The soul's exile was intended to be complete. Thank God, man cannot make it complete! A host of saints have found all the doors open toward God when all other doors were closed. What a multitude of vagabonds and wantons have turned from a heartless respectability to find welcome and forgiveness in God!

This is the wonderful lesson which Jesus tried to teach the Pharisees of old. Jewish society had no place for the wretched outcast whom they came dragging to Him. She had been caught in

most grievous wrong. They disdained, almost, to lay their pious fingers upon her contaminating garments. What would happen, they asked, if their civilization were to be kind to such as she? There was only one answer, they fancied. But some of them lived long enough to find out what would happen to a civilization in which the transgressor has no hope. When the blind man was cast out of the synagogue it was Jesus who looked him up. Peter violated enough sanctities to ostracize a man. But when Peter let Jesus go, Jesus hung on to Peter. So complete was the openness of Jesus's heart that even Judas, when the High Priest turned him down, might still have found pardon and grace.

But it is the Divine Heart only which dares to hold the doors of welcome wide open to wanderers. We are still afraid to do it. There is such a string of prudences to protect, there are so many conventionalities to consult, and so many proprieties to consider, that the man who has sinned against the mandates of society

must expect to take his medicine. Without the ancient Roman oyster shell we still "ostracize." Without papal authority we still excommunicate, and without even the grievance of Sarah we still send Hagar and Ishmael away. Nor does it take much of an offense to call down upon an offender the wrath of society and even of the church. Banishment is not too severe retribution for breaches of etiquette. There is, even in this late day, a cruelty of caste which makes pariahs of our brothers and sisters. At the very best, we entertain but a churlish hope for sinners who have sinned against our creeds and codes. And, what is even worse, we project our petty exclusiveness upon the Father of Spirits, and affect to declare the dimensions of the Heart Divine.

What a beautiful rebuke, then, has come all the way from this ancient scene—that the God of Canaan is also the God of the wilderness beyond; that the Heart which pitied Sarah's childlessness had an arm outstretched for the lonely

woman whom Sarah had banished; that He who promised an inheritance to Isaac, the legitimate son, promised, also, a patrimony and the headship of a nation to the outcast child of Abraham. Such was the revelation which came to Hagar in the wilderness. How far she understood it, we cannot know. Perhaps she missed the lesson quite. But the vision remained, and it measures the spirit toward which we are commanded to grow.

Let me note, briefly, certain other lessons of this story. Hagar found the water for which she and her boy were dying. And when she found it she found it close at hand. Her despair was keenest at the very threshold of supply. The dreariest acres of the wilderness contained the well of Beer-sheba. How true to life it all is, and how slow we are to believe it! Many a soul has been really nearest the answer to its prayer and the realization of its hope when realization and answer seemed farthest removed. The world never tires of remembering Palissy, not merely because he succeeded, but because

his experience is in some warm sense prophetic. He was at his wit's end when he used the meager furnishings of his home to heat his furnace. He could not balk there. He must discover if the porcelain would melt. A climax of agony was in that eager, desperate moment, but his darkness was streaked with the glory of the coming day. "It melts, it melts!" he cried, "I have won!" Victory was never so near as when it seemed that his heart would burst with disappointment.

It is at the end of one's tether that success often lies. Many a man has had to wring his heart's blood into the solution which should dissolve his perplexity. Only when we have invested the last dollar, or put forth some strenuous endeavor; only after we have gone the whole length of personal resource, do we come, perhaps, in sight of the coveted goal. This is part of the lesson of Van Dyke's exquisite story of *The Other Wise Man*. He had failed apparently. The jewels he had been saving as his tribute to the king had been bestowed for ransom and relief

along the way. His quest of the king had failed. An earthquake shook the city, and the falling walls put an end to the old man's pilgrimage. But only his pain was ended. In his supreme sacrifice he was really in sight of his triumph, for the story closes with the simple assurance that "the other wise man had found the king."

"How near God is!" Yet how long it takes, and how far we travel sometimes to find Him! The anguish of the ages may be phrased in that old cry, "O, that I knew where I might find Him!" And when, at length, He is really found, it is at the very side of the seeker. It will be remembered that Jesus once asked the blind man to whom He had given sight, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And the blind man, with unexpecting eyes, looked clear past Jesus toward some inaccessible abode, replying, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Jesus's rejoinder is the eternal comfort of man: "Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that talketh with thee." Such

is your gospel and mine. Let me not deny the reality of the lonely wilderness. It has a peerless ministry to our best growth. But a vast chorus of voices, through nineteen centuries of Christian experience, proclaim that when God is really found He is always found to be near. This is the surprise and ecstasy of conversion: "How near God is!"

But there is one other lesson which may be learned from this old picture. Near as was the well, Hagar would have missed it but for an opening of eyes. Not until God had opened her eyes did she discern the water. Discovery was preceded by a gift of sight. I believe it is always so. Nothing short of a miracle will ordinarily qualify the terrified soul to see its own salvation. When his servant was utterly undone with terror of the foe, Elisha prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see! And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Those celestial helpers had not

just come; they had been present all the time. But the scared young man could not see them until God had opened his eyes. One of our paramount needs is the striking of scales from our eyes. The world proves to be full of beauty when one's eyes have been opened to behold it. There are wells of comfort in the most desolate wilderness for those whose eyes are opened. We shall have a new charity for people when our vision is cleansed so as to behold their good with their bad. We shall discover rainbow tints across the darkest cloud when we lift our eyes to the hills. When our souls get awake we shall learn how many real helpers there are.

"Is this vile world a friend of grace,
To help us on to God?"

Perhaps not. The question is at least debatable. But even this apparently unfriendly world contains a great many friends for those who are shrewd enough to recognize and name them.

And God? An ancient seeker discovered that He is "not far from every one

of us." But multitudes persist in the folly of looking for Him with their eyes shut. They do all sorts of things except the most natural thing in the world: they fail to open their eyes. They search without seeing. They expect to hear without listening. And then they cry out against an "absentee God." "Canst thou by searching find out God?" cried Job. Certainly not by searching with unillumined vision. But when once our eyes have been opened we shall behold Him, "a very present Help."

V
A LESSON FOR THE STREET

And forthwith the angel departed from him.—
Acts xii, 10.

A LESSON FOR THE STREET

THE ordinary visitor in an art gallery is in danger of missing the real gems of the collection. I may say, indeed, that he generally succeeds in missing them. He is full of catalogue information, of course. He knows beforehand just what the casual visitor ought to see. He wears the floor in front of some famous masterpiece, or stands with suitable awe under the spell of a brilliant creation. And he comes away with the profound satisfaction of having seen what everybody else has seen—as if that were the final test of enjoyment and benefit. But the real gems of the gallery, the canvases which a man may take away in his heart without robbing anybody else, these are altogether missed by the ordinary sightseer. Such art treasures hang, perhaps, in a corner, or underneath some splash of brilliant color, and are passed with scarcely a side-long look. The perfunctory visitor never really pauses long enough for such inconspicuous pictures to speak to him.

So most people go through the gallery of Holy Writ. Learned commentaries inform them what to look for. The average Bible reader takes up the Book, not to discover what is really there, but to find, if possible, what somebody else has found. He is very properly impressed with the familiar pictures known and admired of all. He has a kind of acquaintance with Moses on Sinai; a vivid picture of Jacob at Bethel; a sense of pride in Paul on Mars' Hill, and pity for Peter in prison. All these pictures are in his mental album, but the more delicate touches of color, and the unfamiliar groupings of familiar figures, the minor episodes of some bold narrative, and the slant lights of the truth of revelation are commonly unnoticed.

Take, as a fair example, the familiar episode of Peter's imprisonment. How vivid its outlines are! Who, once seeing, can forget? Even the most superficial Bible readers have paused to admire. Who has not heard the clank of the chain which fettered this intrepid preacher?

and the church praying for his release? Children in the primary class can tell of the delivering angel who smote off the hateful claims and led Peter forth. All these outlines are thoroughly familiar, but just beyond these familiar scenes is one which, I suspect, has rarely arrested conviction. I had not seen it myself until another helped me to see it. Read again the significant verse: "And they passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him." Just there let us stand long enough for the meaning of the picture to burn itself into our souls. There are lessons, doubtless, to be learned from the prison darkness; heartening lessons in the coming of the silent messenger who struck off Peter's chains; lessons, too, in the triumphant exit of the Lord's ambassador. But the climax of human interest may be found in this single item of the story, that the angel, having led Peter through one street of the open city, "departed from him."

The picture grows with study. The angel need not have come at all—that would

be life as, in our gloomiest moods, we sometimes picture it. Or, having come, the angel might never have departed—that would be life as the idealist paints it. But the angel who came mysteriously and performed a special mission, who saw Peter safely past the iron gate of the prison and went through one street with him before departing—that is life as we commonly find it and live it. And because the episode holds the common sense and profound philosophy of the divine method of dealing with men; because God's choicest messengers come ordinarily for definite purposes; and because it is rarely possible to detain the special deliverer for more than one street, it may pay us to pause here for our lesson.

We have a fashion of declaring, partly on the authority of the Bible, that the divinest things are the most permanent. And there are real senses in which the declaration is richly true; but there are other senses in which it is totally misleading and false. Unseen things, only, are eternal. It is the deep background which

remains; the figures in the foreground forever shift. We can almost measure the divineness of an experience by the transiency of its stay.

The old, familiar complaint of stricken motherhood has more than a grain of ultimate truth in it: "My child was too sweet to live. I could not expect to keep him." How many lonely mothers have thus recited their heart-breaking creed! Nor are they far from the grasp of a great principle. They have simply got hold of the thorny end of the truth that finest things are least permanent, and that their earth tenure is feeblest. It is the soggy, sodden things that stay. Life's choicest experiences have wings. The glory of a vision is often in inverse ratio to its permanence. Sunset splendor pales and dies while we wonderingly watch it. Goethe says that "if the rainbow lasted half an hour nobody would take the trouble to go out and look at it."

An eminent English writer affirms that all real genius is the quest of that which has been "seen and lost." I believe that

he is right. It may fairly be doubted if painters could paint half so marvelously did their best visions stay and harden at the tip of their brushes. It is the elusive quality of beauty which draws the soul out to its best. Take that familiar musical selection, "The Lost Chord." I never hear it but it sends a peculiar thrill through me. I think I can somehow feel the eager grope of the soul who wrote it. But I have an idea that if the "lost chord" had been found it would have proved not nearly so wonderful as it seemed to the writer in memory. I believe that the composition itself includes chords more beautiful than the haunting one described as lost—chords which never would have been found except in the groping of the soul for that which had been "seen and lost." William James in one of his pungent essays goes so far as to assert that, "regarded as a stable finality, every outward good becomes a mere weariness to the flesh. It must be menaced, must be occasionally lost, for its goodness to be fully felt. . . . No one

knows the worth of innocence till he knows that it is gone forever, and that money cannot buy it back. Not the saint, but the sinner that repenteth, is he to whom the full length and breadth, and height, and depth, of life's meaning is revealed."

All soul-growth, I believe, is the soul's reach for that which must forever lie beyond its grasp.

"Ah, but a man's reach must exceed his grasp!
Else what's Heaven for?"

It is immensely fortunate that we cannot photograph our best moments and frame them, even in gold. The skylark has lost his song when he has been stuffed and set under glass. Let, then, our visions be fringed in mist, and hang just over the horizon, forever eluding us as we approach—so shall we best grow to be worthy of our inheritance.

But I want to keep close to the suggestive imagery of the text. Its particular angel went only a little way with Peter; did for him only what Peter was unable to do for himself. Then, after

passing through one street with him, letting the prisoner's eyes become accustomed to familiar scenes, the angel threw him upon his own resources and left him to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling."

How true it all is to life! God's special angels are for special tasks. It then becomes our duty to take up the routine of the day and finish the task which has been begun for us. The fondest father can only pass through one street with his boy. All that wealth and influence and love combined can do is to give the son a start. I well remember the days when I began to realize that it was up to me to prove myself a man. Father and mother had come with me just as far as was possible for them to come. They had done their full, beautiful part when they had led me safely past many childhood dangers and out into the open street of life. Then, like Peter when the angel left him, it was for me to take up the lessons that had been taught me, and to live the life of a son of God. What

would not a host of mothers have given could they have prolonged the guidance of their children a few more years! Yet the fact remains, though parents live to see their children's grandchildren, that parental love can only go with the child for a part of the journey. Some day, soon or late, every thoughtful soul wakes to the realization that the special angel of parental deliverance has departed.

How far can an instructor go toward making a wise pupil? Not very far at most. He cannot continue to act as personal conductor. Not even Thomas Arnold could build a dunce into a scholar. Michael Angelo did not make his famous pupil a genius; he simply went part of the way with him, breathed on the fire of the other's genius, showed him how to use the powers already granted, and then left him to win the world's praise. All the schools and universities of the country can do little more than start a student in the pathway of learning. The success of the student's career depends upon the sort of work he does after the

special angel of the class room has departed from him. Every successful business man knows just what I mean. Nobody has made him a success. Nobody ever could. The investment and confidence of friends furnish merely a start. All the prospering conditions under which a man begins his business career are merely preludes—the opening of the prison door into the busy street. True it is that the angel of special advantage may seem to tarry with some pilgrims longer than with others. But soon or late he must depart. And no young man is entitled to call himself successful until he has gotten past the first street, and the special angel has departed from him.

How well this striking imagery describes our present duty to our country! We are missing the special delivering angel which was with us in '76 and '61. Many are the streets that we have traversed since then. We have come upon problems which belong to the later stages of national life, and we are meeting the hard collisions of the dusty highway.

Nor are we warranted in expecting God to send His angel to do our work. To face the new problems of the day with quiet courage; to quit ourselves like men in a discharge of the various duties of our high citizenship; to bear the loneliness of night, or the "burden and heat of the day" of struggle, is for us of the new century the paramount thing.

This thought applies with equal appropriateness to the more distinctively religious phases of experience. I believe that nearly every man can look back upon some special agent of divine deliverance. He could almost see a Hand reached forth to save him. He feels that a Divine Helper stepped in to effect his rescue. Poor is the soul whose life history includes no such chapters. But foolish is the soul that expects the special delivering angel to become a traveling companion. The angel's function is discharged when he has delivered a soul from its bondage. The angel's sphere is not the varied street and busy thoroughfare. His business is to deliver from prison, and to walk with

us through one street : it then becomes our business to travel the miles which separate us from home.

That beautiful line of Cardinal Newman's is liable to misuse :

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on."

It surely will. The same power will lead us on, but not the same manifestation of that power, not the same angel. And he who looks for the same special messenger will some day wake with a start, to believe that even God has left him. Ah ! but it is only the angel that departs, only the special angel : God stays.

One of the greatest mistakes of the Christian life is to be found in the expectation that the angel of conversion will tarry with the freshly delivered soul. That angel's business is done when he has released a man from the bondage of his old life. Nor will the peculiar rapture of that moment ever, likely, come again. Because it is a rapture it will fade in the street. Let us not, then, fall into morbid

introspection to account for the angel's absence. He may, it is true, have left us on account of our sins. Such is the terrible penalty of sinning. The moment may come when God can only say of a soul what He said of Ephraim: he is "joined to his idols, let him alone." But to suppose that the departing of the angel is necessarily a judgment upon our lives is to misread the divine method and to needlessly afflict our souls. It was out of an unhealthy and melancholy mood that Cowper sang

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?"

It had gone not only irretrievably but gone inevitably. That "blessedness" can neither be gotten back nor kept from getting away. However clean our hearts, we can never hope to carry the tingle of early religious experience through the teeming streets of life. This is where our doctrine of sanctification sometimes leads us astray. Christians realize that the special angel of conversion has gone,

and then go on to imagine that the all-important thing is to get him back or one like him. Our business rather is to "run and not be weary, to walk and not faint." Moses need not look for a burning bush at every turn of the road. The passing years never brought him a second. There was only one. Paul's experience included but one Damascus vision. One was enough. It set him free. Obedience, sacrifice, martyrdom, were signposts for the rest of the journey.

Let me gather up the practical lessons of this suggestive truth: First, that the loss of the angel means inevitably a time of danger. I notice in many homes a little "gate at the head of the stairs." It means restriction and safety both. What eager, childish eyes peer through to the liberty beyond! By and by the little gate will be taken away, restless feet may at will traverse the stairs, but the removal of the gate stands for new possibilities of peril: a misstep may now mean maiming or death. So with those tense moments when the soul first feels the power of its

own resources. How many pilgrims have lost the way when the special angel vanished!

Second, the loss of the angel means not shrinkage but enlargement of life. Something is forfeited in the interest of maturity. Israel lost the pillar of cloud and fire when she entered Canaan.. The manna ceased, but the land itself flowed with milk and honey. The tabernacle passed away, but in its stead stood the temple on Mount Moriah. Only by loss do we enter into our richest gains. "I cannot admire a fugitive and cloistered virtue," says Jeremy Taylor. Nor can anyone else. But the "fugitive and cloistered virtue," is the only sort that is possible while the special angel remains with the soul.

Third, the loss of the angel, in the sense in which we have been studying it, means least of all the withdrawal of God. Rather, the angel who vanishes at the end of one street delivers us into the encompassing care of the Father. And the dark helps to find the stars. God is the God of the street. All routine, drudgery, and

toil are His. To miss Him at the altar may be to find Him at the desk and in the shop. He is never "far from every one of us." Greater than the privilege of following some special angel of divine deliverance is to have the sense of an abiding Good Spirit.

VI

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BACKSLIDER

Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this
present world.—2 Tim. iv, 10.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BACKSLIDER

It reads like a fragment of apostolic diary—this hurried record. And, like the jottings of a diary, it hints at far more than it says. To read it may be easy, but I fancy that it was far from easy writing. Paul's heart hurt him as he made the chronicle. One could easily imagine that this part of the letter was punctuated with tears. A man who loved as Paul loved, and who counted his assets in the property he had gained in other souls, could scarcely be complacent over the defection of a well-beloved colaborer.

Demas had certainly been that. We do not know much else about him. The whole story is soon told. There are, in all, only three references to him. In one of them his name is affectionately coupled with that of the "beloved physician." In a second he is mentioned as among those who helped to brighten the great apostle's imprisonment at Rome. Which two fragments, together with the pathetic reference of the text, make up the whole story

of Demas, so far as it has been left on record.

Yet these are notes enough to yield a vivid biography of the man. His, evidently, was one of the natures which easily kindle. A single live spark produced combustion, and he was soon aflame. He responded with passion to the appeal of the gospel. "The zeal of the Lord's house" consumed him for a time. For a little while he was a type of devotion. The fire seemed to have burned out all his dross. He was ready for anything and everything. Paul could scarcely lay out work fast enough to meet the enthusiasm of this new apprentice. Demas was ready to turn the world upside down for his new Master. Then, possibly without apparent warning or explanation—nobody seemed to know just how it happened—the flame in his soul lost its brilliancy, turned sickly, flickered, and utterly died out, leaving the haunting ashes of an old love. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Such an episode, alas! was not new to

the early history of the church. "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him"—so reads one of the first chapters of Jesus's ministry. No gospel record would be complete without including the coldness of Peter and the perfidy of Judas. Even the pierced Hand was unable to hold the little group unbroken. The New Testament gives us snapshots of a few souls who yielded themselves to the divine magnetism, and who, despite many shameful derelictions, succeeded in keeping "the faith once delivered to the saints." Peter and John, Thomas and Stephen, Salome and Martha—we know some of the names. But only God has record of the men and women who turned cold; disciples who were easily enticed away from their divine Master by the seduction of some earthly voice; primitive Christians who passed from the spell of the new life back to the tyranny and deception of the old. "Will ye also go away?" Jesus once asked His little band. There were Demases before Demas.

But that which interests us as a modern congregation is not that there were Demases before Demas, but that there have been Demases since; that there are Demases now. The saddest entries of a church record are those which must be made with invisible ink. Not death—that entry with black and white—but spiritual death, the decline and decay of discipleship, the gradual wasting and impoverishment of souls—this is the saddest record a pastor has to keep. And it is part of the tragedy that no pastor can make even approximate official tally of such losses. Other losses may be measurably computed. The *Discipline* makes provision for them. Opposite one name is written, “removed by letter,” with its declaration of strength transferred to other fields; against another name a single word, “withdrawn,” signifying the soul’s own deliberate severance of Christian fellowship; after still another name is the record of the “grim reaper.” What a list of those whom we have “loved and lost”! Some of the names can be read

only through the lenses of our tears. What tender reminder of pillars removed, of foundations shaken, of sundered companionships! In some rational sense we can sum the losses, we can count the missing.

But this other class, the Demases—what entry shall one make concerning them? I know of no record which the pastor is authorized to set opposite their names. They have not passed from the fellowship of earth, not even from the nominal membership of the church. Against their names is merely an empty line, part of whose meaning is graven deep in the pastor's heart. They are the paradox and dismay of the church, the grief of God Himself. They have not "removed" and yet they are gone; not "withdrawn" except by the informal shrinkage and severance of the heart; not "died" save to the holy purposes and warm fealties of other years. Yet when the church takes account of stock, appraises its assets, calls the roll of its marching forces, these are not, they can-

not be, included. They are the Demases who have forsaken us.

Every army must needs reckon with the factor of desertion. No matter what the pay or the quality of the mess, in spite of the glitter and glamour of military life, many soldiers grow weary of it all. Between the mustering in and the mustering out is the tragedy of desertion. Roll call tells of another havoc besides that of bullets. No movement was ever so holy in purpose or so perfect in organization as to carry with it all its own legitimate adherents. American history must always make account of Benedict Arnold and Charles Lee. Luther had the bitterness of seeing some of his stanchest supporters fall away. Indeed, it is a matter of history that defections were at one time so numerous that the Protestant reformers actually entertained propositions of reconciliation with Rome. And through all the chapters of church history sounds this dreary, disheartening note. Every age, every church, has had its Demases. Disciples have fallen away almost before

their names could be written in heaven. Jesus once looked into the eyes of the little company of His intimates, and said, with a pang of unutterable heartsickness and inextinguishable pity, "One of you shall betray me." Not even that little group could be kept unbroken. And as the Son of man looked down the path along which the triumphs of His kingdom must be won, He foresaw and announced the days when "many would be offended because of Him."

The practical working of modern life insurance is based upon a careful tabulation of mortuary statistics, according to which every holder of a policy has a normal "expectation of life." On the basis of that expectation he is taken as a "risk." As a matter of fact, he may outlive or underlive his estimated term. The individual may disappoint himself or beat the company. But the average tenure of life can be scientifically reckoned. The total number of deaths for a given area of territory and length of time can be forecast with almost as much exactitude as the

phases of the moon or the movements of the planets. Insurance tables do not assume to say "who," but "how many."

I fancy it is quite possible to make similar computations concerning the spiritual mortality of our churches. The convert to Jesus has a normal "expectation of life." Looking at himself in the light of unemotional statistics, he can almost forecast how long he will "hold out." The average sinner is still an average man after he gives his heart to God. The best resolutions have a mean vitality. There is what may be called a normal resistance to evil. The rank and file of men have only a certain percentage of moral iron in the blood. And, in terms of these things, I suppose that a competent statistician could tell, with harrowing precision, how many disciples will endure a twelvemonth, and how many will probably still be "alive unto God" at the end of a score of years. I do not want to be that statistician. Even if the Recording Angel were willing to tell, I should not be willing to know beforehand, the names

of the Demases for next year. It is hard enough to meet the disappointment as it comes. But sometimes as I have stood at the chancel to welcome into our fellowship a group of new disciples, amid the gladness of the hour there has swept in upon me a wave of inexpressible sadness. For I knew with a terrible certainty that some of those who took the vows with greatest ardor would be prompt to forsake their Lord, that the first forward shadow of a cross would numb their zeal, and that others would lose their way with the City Celestial in full view.

Backsliding is not, however, a peculiar characteristic of modern discipleship. I do not know that this age has any special surfeit. Demases belong to no particular age or style of conversion. Some of the most desperate backsliders I have ever known could tell a most rapturous story of early discipleship. I have sometimes been asked by anxious churchmen how many of my spiritual children would probably "stand fast." I do not know.

Having done the best he can, there are some things a man must leave with God.

“ . . . I do not ask to see
The distant scene. . . .”

But of this I am persuaded, that the percentage of Demases under the new regime will not be radically different from the percentage under the old. Men who fairly groaned their way to Methodist altars and went forth shouting the psalm of a great forgiveness are apparently as “dead in trespasses and sins” as some who were born into the kingdom without the accompaniment of storm and earthquake. I could pick out Demases who, in my childhood, seemed sufficiently buoyant of faith to ride out any storm. They had cast both anchors within the veil, yet to-day their craft lie beached and blackening on a pitiless lea shore. Every old church record suggests thoughts “too deep for tears.” Affluent souls have gone into spiritual bankruptcy. Great hearts as well as camp followers have deserted. Even Peter denied his Lord.

These hard facts cannot be ignored.

There have always been Demases; there will be Demases in the church of to-day. Nor can we wholly prevent. What our Master was unable to do we can scarcely hope to accomplish. But we can at least remember His patience and tenderness with those who fell away. "Until he find it" is the term of the shepherd's quest. "Seventy times seven" was the Master's minimum of forgiveness. Peter had to be won back more than once. He grew so utterly cold that he tried to warm himself at the enemy's fire. Thomas needed a special visit to banish his doubts. Of the whole company of men who later became the founders of the faith it is recorded that they "forsook Him and fled." The church was built on material so miserably weak that it crushed with the first weight of responsibility. And when in the centuries since has it been otherwise? God has had to build most of His saints out of men who did just what Demas did. Jerry McAuley is said to have lapsed nine times. Abelard had to come back from grievous defection. In the bosom of the

church—nay, in the forefront of the army—are men and women who have needed the whole seventy times seven forgivenesses. I have allowed myself to wonder if even Demas did not return. The anchor of an old love will often hold with marvelous tenacity. Even the belated memory of the Father's house has brought many a vagabond home.

But let us notice what took Demas out of the apostolic company. Paul expressly names it. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." *"Having loved this present world."* It was worldliness, as we should say, that cost Demas his hope of heaven. The high spicing of worldliness killed his taste for the "bread that cometh down from heaven." A sort of creeping paralysis took the elasticity out of his walk with God. Some earth-begotten germ got into his blood, and, working unsuspected for a season, finally claimed him for its victim. Worldliness defeated this much-beloved disciple, as it has defeated a long line of Demases in the ages since.

What, then, is worldliness? It is obviously far easier to name than to define. And the difficulty of definition has rather increased than diminished with the complexities of modern civilization. Worldliness—you can no more catch it in a classification than you can catch sunshine with a scoop net; or stop it with particular prohibitions than you can stop the incoming tide by throwing up breakwaters. Worldliness peers in mockingly through monastic shutters, and thrusts up a new head for every old one cut off. Just here is the secret of the church's failure to cope with it. We have tried to make a category of worldliness, in terms in which it should be possible to determine spiritual health and disease. This was the genesis, as it has since been the despair, of the celebrated "Paragraph 248" of our *Discipline*. Our fences have neither kept out worldliness nor stayed its havoc among our members. There have been as many Demases since 1872 as there were before it.

I remember a certain select school in

which it was the custom to put the matriculate through a fire of cross-examination. He was asked if he had had scarlet fever, chicken pox, whooping cough; if he had been vaccinated; if he used profane language or tobacco; if his associates were good and his habits studious. The inquisition was keen and thorough. I doubt not that many undesirable pupils were thus weeded out. But, notwithstanding the classified precautions, I noticed that the aforesaid school included about as many scamps, and graduated about as many dunces, as the average American school. Our modern bonding and surety companies, which have so nearly done away with the old fashion of personal bondsmen, have a most painstaking routine method of getting at facts of personal history. They mean to leave the knave no door of entrance to their protection. They turn down incipient rascals without mercy. They put every candidate on the same rack. Yet, in spite of all their pains, they are constantly called upon to make good the petty larcenies or the

princely defalcations of men whom they have bonded. Most of us are familiar with the formidable list of questions which every applicant for life insurance must satisfactorily answer. Every disease and every root of disease seem included. The "first-class" risk in a conservative life insurance company might almost expect to live a hundred years. Yet the fact is that the policy holder with the greatest normal expectation of life may be the first to die. Susceptibility to disease can never be adequately set down in a table, nor can the peril of worldliness be expressed in any particular catalogue of indulgences.

I agree in a general way with the labels of worldliness in general use. That cards have been a prolific source of mischief is not even an open question. Souls have often been the stake at the card table. Men have dealt out destinies while they were dealing those little pasteboards. But just where is the clear line between cards and dominoes? or cards and checkers? Is it essentially worldly to play with ivory

balls on a green table, and essentially unworldly to play with wooden balls on a green field? Surely the difference is not entirely in the composition of the balls, or between a cue and a mallet. I have known ministers to become thoroughly worldly over a game of croquet.

I do not believe we shall ever estimate the moral undermining which the theater has in all ages wrought. It is blacklisted in our Book of Discipline. But is it really possible to dispose of the matter with such a mere snapping of disdainful fingers? Do people earn the right of heaven by simply staying away from the theater? Is it the number of characters or the presence of scenery that constitutes the harm? What is God's rule for you and me? There must be a rule.

I do not need any printed paragraph to convince me of the perils of the dance. The physiological argument is quite sufficient. Former Superintendent Byrnes was not pleading as a churchman when he declared that ninety per cent of the magdalens of New York City traced their

downfall directly or indirectly to the dance. But is the lightfootedness of childhood, the instinctive rhythm of nerve and muscle, to be put under the same ban? Is "three four" time more iniquitous than "four four"? Shall we succeed in keeping staid feet perfectly still? What is the truth for a Christian? or for anybody else? There is only one rule for all.

Dr Jowett tells of a landlord of his who on Saturday evening came into the general sitting room and carefully locked up the piano and unlocked the melodeon. I can remember a day in New England when the stringed instrument really seemed to utter more worldly sounds than its reeded neighbor, and the first time I sat down at the keyboard of the piano on Sunday I thought I might have offended heaven. Worldliness—I tell you, friends, the definition of it is not easy to give. There is no more doubt of its existence than there is of the existence of malaria. But how to guard against it! I would to God there were some adequate classification which a man might give to his neigh-

borhood, or to his church, or even to himself. Then, in addition to all personal considerations, every Christian owes something to the weaker brother. Paul said he would never eat any meat if meat made his brother to offend. It was a magnificent thing to say. It was like the greatest apostle of the ages. But it stands us in good stead to remember that a man might actually starve to death on the logic of that great utterance.

I have read somewhere of a young woman who, on her deathbed, expressed a desire for the comfort of the presence of some members of the church. Not a member of the church herself, she seemed to turn instinctively to them, as if they might be expected to speak to some unreached and unsatisfied part of her heart. Some one of her acquaintances was named—a member of the church. “No, don’t send for her,” was the quick response; “she has done the same worldly things that I have done. She cannot help me now. I want the other kind to talk and pray with me.” This incident holds pun-

gent, biting truth. But does it hold the whole truth? Would the bare fact that some particular church member had never danced or played cards or attended the theater—would that bare fact of abstinence have constituted a sufficient qualification for ministry in that particular sick room? I know multitudes of church members who never sin against our special amusement paragraph, yet who are as thoroughly worldly as their offending friends.

There are so many unclassified items of worldliness, it can never be perfectly defined by running through a list of things. As someone says, "It is possible to avoid all things labeled worldly and yet to remain incorrigibly worldly; to be steeped through and through with the spirit of worldliness." A man may be a thief and still not be classified as such. There are more forms of dishonesty and meanness than could ever be tabulated. If sensuality could only be killed by constraint! Even if we knew the particular forms of worldliness which caused Demas to backslide,

we should be little profited. We might be strong in the points in which he was weak, and still go hopelessly astray. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," but against the spirit of worldliness. There is but one catholic rule. Whatever can be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, we are perfectly free to do." Wherever a disciple can take his Master, he may honorably be found, but that which weans a soul from God is worldliness.

The worldliness, then, which makes Demases in any age is an atmosphere, an essence. It is so subtle and full of deceit that a devout churchman may take it to church with him. I have known some disciples who were quite as worldly at their prayers as those who had gone to the theater. A business man may acquire the spirit of worldliness as truly with the first dollar as with the last of a million. It may grow as rank under a poke bonnet as under the flowers and birds of a modern picture hat. Worldliness is life without "high calling," life without perspective, life with nothing beyond the horizon. In

other words, it is life lacking the quality of faith. It is the spirit of Esau, who preferred present pottage to future inheritance. It would rather have fruit unripe than wait for the ripening.

Hear, then, the conclusion of the matter. Let us not make the mistake of taking our present grade in terms of special mortifications or particular excellencies. A man may become a Demas while he is still going through the motions of a Paul or Apollos. He may speak with the tongues of men and angels and still be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Christianity is not a string of observances, but an essence. Worldliness changes its form with the moon. We must be forever on guard. The Trojans were prepared against all sorts of enemies except enemies in a wooden horse. Even virtue may be infected with worldliness. Part of the worldliness of the Pharisees was their love for the chief seats in the synagogue. To detect the first symptoms of spiritual decay, to be on guard against the tainting of our vir-

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tues, to pierce the fairest disguises of worldliness—this is the only assurance against the fate of Demas.

“There has come to my mind a legend, a thing I had half forgot,
And whether I read it or dreamed it, ah, well, it matters not:

It is said that in heaven at twilight a great bell softly swings,

And man may listen and hearken to the wondrous music that rings.

If he puts from his heart's inner chamber all the passion, pain, and strife,

Heartache and weary longing that throb in the pulses of life—

If he thrusts from his soul all hatred, all thoughts of wicked things,

He can hear in the holy twilight how the bell of the angels rings.

And I think there lies in the legend, if we open our eyes to see,

Somewhat of inner meaning, my friend, to you and to me.

Let us look in our hearts and question: Can pure thoughts enter in

To a soul if it be already the dwelling of thoughts of sin?

So, then, let us ponder a little—let us look in our hearts and see

If the twilight bell of the angels could ring for us—you and me.”

VII
AT THE FORK OF THE ROAD

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?—John vi, 68.

AT THE FORK OF THE ROAD

It was a moment of peculiar intensity. Portents and mystery seemed to brood in the air. The tide of popular sentiment which up to this time had set in Jesus' favor was beginning to ebb. The flattering crowds were melting away. His lessons were too high and searching for mere bread-seekers and timeservers to accept. He was telling them more than they wanted to know. Disappointment and defection were spreading. So that, as we read again the vivid record, we are quite prepared for its depressing word: "from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

And the Teacher Himself drew a little closer to the group of His intimates, looked searchingly into their very souls, and asked, with a yearning, tremulous interest, "Will ye also go away?" How tenderly human that heart cry was! The world could never have loved a Man who under such stress of circumstances was indifferent and cold. The sword which,

as He said, He came to bring to earth was rending His own heart. And for an instant He permitted His closest friends to see the wound. Nay, He almost begged for sympathy. Just a word of assurance that He could count upon the loyalty of the few that now remained; the comfort of hearing them *say* what He knew they *felt*; the balm of an expressed devotion—this was what He craved.

But more than this was in His mood and question. He was not so much bidding for personal sympathy as for a stancher discipleship. Jesus was far too much the man to stand candidating for popular applause. Rather was He seeking to advance His friends a degree in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Some single moments are worth years. And Jesus felt in the peculiar stress and wrench of this occasion an opportunity to evoke the disciples' best. He gave them a chance to feel the tug of their real anchorage. He seemed to let go—that He might recover them to a more vital loyalty. "Will ye also go away?"

I remember vividly a scene in an old New England farmhouse. It was mid-winter without, but the great log blazed so cheerily within, and the comradeship of the occasion was so hearty, one could almost ignore the driving storm outside. I had forgotten that anybody in the world was cold. Then the door opened—and quickly closed. Some one had gone out. But I can still feel the inrush of frost. The storm seemed to get into my bones. Through the open door I caught just one glimpse of the driving snow outside, with all its chill pitilessness and terror. How bleak it was! It seemed that in one brief instant I had looked all the way from heaven to perdition. I had looked outside. And how newly warm and sacredly safe the room was afterward!

One look outside! Jesus gave His disciples one such outside look in the incident described in this scripture. From the fireside of fellowship with Him to the bleakness of separation; from the bounty of His table to the barren “wastes of unbelief”; from the light of His face

to the dark and the cold—such was the contrast. Just for an instant He swung the door of a tremendous alternative and let those first disciples feel the inrush of the cold outside. “Will ye also go away?” Peter got that look outside. For a moment, at least, his world was Christless, and the chill nearly froze his soul. He had in imagination followed the crowd away from his Master. He felt the frost of separation. Then he turned a startled face back to Jesus, pouring out the passion of his devotion in an utterance so supremely beautiful it helps us to forget his sometime cowardice and perfidy. “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

Ah, that is it! “To whom shall we go?” The great alternative for Peter is still for us the great alternative. We may “go away,” as so many have done, but “to whom shall we go?” What is really left when Jesus and the things for which He stands and the experiences to which He leads are left behind? With such thoughts would I disturb a too easy composure. In the interest of a juster esti-

mate of the Master whom we profess to follow; for a firmer faith in the truths which Jesus taught and lived; for the sake of an ampler personal life in the discipleship of the Man of Nazareth, I would be glad to jostle, if possible, your present calm. Such a look outside as was granted to Peter that day would be a veritable "means of grace" to some of us. We take too much for granted. I may say that we are too easily and comfortably Christian. So accustomed are we, on the one hand, to the light and bounty of our inheritance, and so insidiously infected, on the other hand, by the liberalizing spirit of the day, we are in danger of losing our sense of the preëminent and unshared glory of Jesus. We come into the kingdom, and stay in it, perhaps, with a sort of easy content, never really having faced the fearsome alternative presented in the text. Only too rarely do we pause to remind ourselves what Jesus is to humanity; what He means to the future; what He has done personally for us.

Men are most likely to accept Him as the farmer does the recurring seasons; as the business man does his success; as a boy does his mother. I had to lose my mother in order to appreciate her. When, the morning after she slipped away, I came down to breakfast and looked across the breakfast table out into a world from which she had gone forever, I began to realize what she had been to me. And I have been continuing to learn the lesson ever since. It takes, ordinarily, the shock of loss, or at least of contemplated loss, to wake a man to the value of his everyday possessions. Let us, then, cultivate that mood just now. We may, as Jesus suggested, "go away." Multitudes have already turned back from following Him. The roads are lined with returning pilgrims who have fed on His loaves but repudiated His truth. There are

"So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind."

We may go away; but "to whom shall we go" after we go away? What is the alternative?

One of the ancient faiths, perhaps. So we are being assured by many votaries. London has its Mohammedan mosque, and Boston its Buddhist temple. Nor were they built for Arabs and Japanese. They are really dedicated to discontented disciples of Jesus Christ. We have but to read the religious notices of any metropolitan paper to be brought face to face with a list of the substitutes which are being offered for the faith of Jesus. Nor have I a single ungenerous word for any one of the great faiths of the ages. Loyalty to my Master does not include or require sneers for the religion of India or Egypt. I firmly believe in what Matheson calls the "Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions." I give full honor to all saints in whatever garb and under whatever sky. But Buddhism or Confucianism as a substitute for the gospel seems like moving back the hand of the clock, like turning on the street lights of the city after the sun is high, like going from calculus back to vulgar fractions. One has only to range Mahomet, Gau-

tama, or any of the other great prophets alongside Jesus, and, like Saul among his countrymen, Jesus towers above them all. He speaks with a finality which makes their utterances sound like chatter. He is the Great Physician at whose clinic all other healers gather as students. "Eternal light came in with Him, and made the whole world new." Let history be compared with history, saint with saint, teaching with teaching—what has any one of the ancient faiths, what have all the ancient faiths, to offer as a substitute for the good news and companionship of Jesus. "To whom shall we go" when we turn away from the Great Teacher? He has, according to Peter, "the words of eternal life."

Or current skepticism, let it be a substitute for Jesus. Vast is the concourse of pilgrims marching to that polar shrine. Unbelief is in the air. It is a parasite of modern thought. Men are asking daring, defying questions. Nor will any sane defender of the faith deny the tremendous paradoxes of human life, even under the

light of the gospel of Jesus. This is an impossible world to understand, and one of the marks of our growth is to be found in our increasing intellectual honesty. The modern man lives in a sort of supreme fear of being duped. But when this fear of self-deception goes so far as to get itself built into a sort of shrine and worshiped as Clifford worshiped it, we are at least candidates for commiseration. It is like keeping out of battle for the sake of avoiding wounds. And when all the deeper interests of the heart are the stake to be fought for!

How bleak it all is! It is not easy to forget those frosted words of Clifford, written after he had cast out all his native beliefs. "I have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth, and I have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion was dead." And Harriet Martineau? She fairly chanted her emancipation from the shackles of religion. All her early gods had gone out the door. She was free, so she said, and exulted in her freedom. Yet

somehow her shouts of triumph have the sound of the whistling a boy does when he is afraid of the dark. Utter indeed was the gloom of the wood in which Robert Elsmere felt himself growing blind to all the best visions of the soul. And George Eliot's last days were filled with a sort of frenzy of despair. For years she had made a mock of faith. No infidelity was blatant and bitter enough to shock her. But the arrows she had so despised struck in at her own heart as she neared the end of the journey. May God save us from a crisis of torment such as that! May some good spirit hold us back from the far reaches of infidelity where the soul, Prometheus bound, can only watch the sun of healing sink and the stars of hope go out!

Or sheer worldliness—shall we turn from Christ to it? Such is quite the popular thing to do. A large section of humanity has espoused for its creed an abject materialism. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." What a vanity fair is modern social life!

Multitudes are trying to drown their disgust in deeper cups of pleasure and riot. Men call the doctrine of Jesus "hard." "But how much harder," cries Tolstoi, "how much harder is the doctrine of the world! In my own life I can reckon up as much suffering caused by following the doctrine of the world as many martyrs have endured for the doctrine of Jesus." Yet this "doctrine of the world" is preached to human hearts as a doctrine of "good news," and crowds have turned away from the Man of Nazareth to hear it. What a travesty upon hearts, what a mockery of happiness! The modern martyrs are not in the church; they are in the world. For real martyrdom to-day, name the frenzies of contemporaneous finance. Ask the women who are racked in an inquisition worse than Torquemada's. Watch the young people training to the enjoyment of a diet of husks and sawdust. And worst of all, these crucifixions are entirely gratuitous. They give the cross without the crown or the promise of it. They yield the pang without the palm.

What relief, then, to turn back to the companionship of Him in whose presence sin shrank ashamed, and human hearts grew brave! Who but a soul that has been outside can know the delight of that return? It is like shutting the door against the storm and the vision of it. It is home-coming after a journey of peril and pain. It is the feel of a mother's caressing hand, driving back the horrid shapes of our dreams. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" We cannot "go." We can only stay.

But let me be more explicit. "To whom shall we go" for a knowledge of our own selves? The ancient dictum exhorts us to get acquainted with ourselves. But how few ever succeed in reaching that knowledge until they come face to face with Jesus Christ. The rich young man, when he came to Jesus, counted himself an excellent specimen of manhood. He had kept a lot of laws. He felt justifiably proud of his record. He was prepared to defend his conduct against all criticism—until he met Jesus. But in that

vision he saw *himself*, and "went away much grieved." Or the woman at the well. She had scarcely paused to reckon with herself. She was almost brazen in her defiance of delicacy and honor. She felt ready to stout it out with any objector. But one day Jesus sat down at the well-curb beside her, looked clear down into her soul, and talked quietly with her. "Go call thy husband," He said. And she dared not lie to Him or evade. For the first time she knew herself. And Peter. He had just denied his Master. Cowardice had crisised in open repudiation. And with every fresh iteration of denial Peter grew more blatant until at length, in a fury of passion, he fell into common profanity. I have an idea that he almost believed his own denial—until he caught the eye of Jesus. That one look was enough. Peter saw himself, and "went out and wept bitterly."

None can ever be our real master save One who reckons with our sins. Renan, once asked what he did with sin, replied, "I suppress it." And the Sage of Con-

cord declared that "no man can afford to waste moments in compunctions for the past." There are times when we delight to hear such cheering testimonies. They comfort us for a while. They help anæsthetize conscience. But when conscience wakes neither Renan nor Emerson will do. The soul wants Jesus. "O for a religion with a Redeemer in it!" cried one of Emerson's close literary associates, and entered the Romish Church.

To whom shall we go for our ideals? The story goes that a certain eminent painter kept always in his studio a set of precious stones. They cost him the proceeds of many a canvas. But he said he needed them in order to refresh his jaded sense of color. Back to them he would often turn when he had lost the vivid sense of blue or crimson. And in their calm, unfading depths he never failed to find new tone and beauty. So men turn back to Jesus. He tones up stale lives. He gives back the glory of lost ideals. He helps keep the "first love." He holds the heart up to pitch. To what other

Master can one turn for such things?
"To whom shall we go?"

"You would make a splendid model for the Magdalen," said an artist to the woman before him in his studio. She was singularly beautiful of form and face, and she had, moreover, a remarkable imitative gift. Were she to pose as Mary Queen of Scots, she would spend weeks in painstaking study of the character and finally appear in the studio as if Mary herself had stepped in alive. "I would make a good model of the Magdalen? And who was she?" asked the woman. For answer the artist handed her, half jokingly, a Testament, with the leaf turned down at the story. Some three weeks passed, and one day the woman failed to keep her appointment with the artist. Other weeks passed, and finally he went in search of her. And he found her, sitting at the feet of a new Master, devoting her life to the redemption of other Magdalens.

And the answers to our questions—
where shall we go for them? To whom

but to Him who answered more questions by mere silence than have other teachers by all their learned chatter. What answers Jesus has given to all sorts of heart queries! The trouble is that men have not often enough sat at His feet. He has an ultimate word for the burning issues of the day. The problem of the family, the problem of the employer and the employed, the problem of wealth and poverty—Jesus has somewhat final to say on these things. And some day we shall need take time to ascertain what He really said.

And comfort, the insatiate craving of the human heart, to whom but to Jesus shall we go for it? "I beg pardon," said the nurse to Rudyard Kipling while he lay desperately ill in New York City; "I beg pardon, I thought you wanted something." "I do," replied the sick man; "I want my heavenly Father." Such is the sort of longing most of us bring with us to church. Hearts hurt, souls stabbed, courage crushed—what a company we are, with our cries articulate and inartic-

ulate! And some are freshly from the mounds where sleep the newly dead. "To whom shall we go" but to Him who stood by an empty sepulcher of old? As an eminent author once said, "The gospel is the only message which even sounds as if it came from the other shore." Then for a truthful knowledge of our own selves; for the freshening of our ideals; for answer to life's most fevered questions; for comfort which satisfies—"to whom shall we go" but to Jesus? Go not. Stay!

"But thee, but thee, O Sovereign Seer of time,
But thee, O poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,
But thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's comrade, Servant, King, or Priest—
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
What least defect or shadow of defect,
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in thee,
Jesus, Good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ."

VIII
DOING GOOD BY PROXY

He said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff, . . . and lay my staff upon the face of the child.—2 Kings iv, 29.

DOING GOOD BY PROXY

HUMAN nature still exults in "signs and wonders." Prodigies appeal powerfully to the common mind. The extraordinary and superhuman wake a special set of noisy echoes. Childhood's naive delight in "Aladdin's Lamp" and "Seven League Boots," and the whole realm of incredible performance, is not easily or soon outgrown. A great many older folks would, if the truth came out, rather read such tales of marvel than the sober narratives of fact and truth. There is a sort of inebriety in the sensation of letting one's imagination run riot. Let to-morrow's paper announce that some neighboring townsman has really seen a spook, or has achieved some surpassing and incredible result, and multitudes will skip the latest war notes and political tittle-tattle to revel in the more startling chronicle.

In this inbred love of marvel and surprise may be found, I believe, one reason for the immense and undue emphasis put upon the miraculous transactions of the

Bible. I venture assertion that the average reader of the Scriptures has turned to its sacred pages with the piquant expectation of being astonished; of finding evidences for the divineness of the Book in doings accounted incredible elsewhere. The very same spirit which makes a lad vividly acquainted with Samson's huge strength, with David's epoch-marking sling, and with Aaron's rod that budded—long before the lad has any appreciation of, or admiration for, the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount—leads his elders to the weird narratives and superhuman exploits of ancient worthies.

I doubt if the practice has been vitally illuminative, or practically helpful. Prodigious, either ancient or modern, have relatively small actual bearing upon our lives. That marvel which takes one's breath away, by so much incapacitates him for daily task and homely duty. He who goes a-gunning, even in the sacred preserves of the Bible, for start and amazement, is apt to miss the real treasure

of the Book. God used a burning bush, the pillar of cloud, and parted rivers in His process of self-revelation; but when He came to His best message, to the utterance of His inmost Heart, to the disclosure of the real "secret of the Lord," He sent a Man to speak with human tongue and bless with a human hand.

Hence I affirm that, not in high flights of tropical fancy, but in sober, serious paths of everyday burden-bearing; not in miraculous interpretations so much as in the ordinary divine provisions for the children of the King; not in *superhuman*, but in intensely *human* life, as there portrayed, lie the richest lessons and the finest inspirations of the Bible. It is not their great divergence from, but their intimate approach to, our daily lives, that makes patriarch and prophet, priest and king, apostle and revelator practically useful to us. Had Jesus been less human the world might have forgotten Him. Because He brought His beautiful aloofness so warmly close to throbbing hearts; because He was so much like the men

among whom He moved; because He is so like us, with the meanness and pettiness left out; because of the beautiful parallels of His experience with the heart-yearnings and heart-agonies of men of all ages, multitudes would die for Him to-day.

I might pause in passing to admit that we have burned too much powder already in discussion of the prodigies of the Bible. Why take valuable time trying to determine just what sort of fish was subsidized for passenger service in the case of the rebellious prophet? The value of the story is not in the providence of a fish, but in the disobedience of a man. What vital difference whether or not the ass talked articulately to Balaam, or a combination of lamps, trumpets, and pitchers accomplished the overthrow of Jericho? The lessons which I believe God would have us learn are the plain, obvious lessons stamped all over the transactions. Granted that the Apocalypse does not contain a diagram of the golden streets, or an adequate conception of the Celestial

City, it still describes, very plainly, the sort of folks who make Heaven here and hereafter. The real glory of the Bible, its best helpfulness to me, resides in its human visions and transformations; in its studies of human life as played upon, sifted, and sanctified by the Divine Spirit.

This is assuredly far enough from the story of Elisha and the transaction of the text. I simply wanted to enforce, beforehand, the general assertion that the essential value of such a life to us must be sought in those very experiences which are most homely and commonplace—most like our own. The special marvels which lift Elisha's life above the normal ranges of our own carry him, thereby, out of the realm of practical advantage to us. But when the prophet is so much like us that he seems to have stepped out of our very ranks, out of our congregation, to perform his task and discharge his mission, he becomes truly our teacher. Consanguinity of spirit gives him the right to speak to our faults. Because he is our flesh we accept his suggestions.

So in this familiar story concerning the Shunammite household. I might emphasize the things Elisha did that we can never do. I might possibly succeed in rousing amazement by sketches of his extraordinary gifts and powers. I have chosen, rather, to dwell upon a simple incident in which the prophet deputed another to a task which required himself. The narrative is known to all. The only child of the Shunammite household in which Elisha had long been a welcome guest had been smitten with sunstroke. No remedies had availed. Carrying the little form up into the prophet's chamber, the mother hurried to find Elisha. Her appeal needed few words. Surely the prophet need not be miraculously endowed to read the flaming signals of distress in the mother's eyes and bearing. One boon she asked—Elisha's presence in her home.

For the time being Elisha did not offer to grant that supreme request. Moved he must have been. He loved the home. He must have been planning to put forth his utmost endeavor. Perhaps he was

already formulating a method of relief. But, whatever was in his mind, the record says that, instead of starting for the stricken home, he sent Gehazi, his servant: told him to take the prophet's staff and lay it upon the face of the child. As if there might be some virtue in the staff which the prophet had carried! I wonder if Elisha had reached the blighting mood of superstitious regard for himself and his mission. It is possible that success and fame had puffed him up. Anyway, he sent Gehazi with the staff. He might as well have sent a printed prayer for the recovery of the lad. Gehazi brought back word that the prophet's staff exercised no spell; the child had "not awaked."

Nor was there a better word until the prophet went into the upper chamber himself, laid his own warm body against the cold little form of the child, put his own lips down to those which the stroke had turned ashen, and with the urgency of his own abundant life called the child from the shadows.

But that sending of a servant and a staff

instead of going—how like our modern practice it is! Some great need cries for us to come. Some direful want stares up into our face. We are truly touched with the world's sorrows. We feel the claim of country, of kindred, of Christ. We are moved to go; but we send our staff instead of going. We dare not refuse aid: we are not quite aroused to the point of personal endeavor and sacrifice. So Gehazi acts as our deputy, bearing our compliments and the prophet's staff.

Service by proxy; good by indirect methods; sacrifice reduced to the lowest terms of personal comfort—the practice has been growing upon us. Our age is in danger of seeking to discharge most of its obligations on this wise. The modern Elisha is busy, oppressed with duties, hedged about with formalities. Gehazi and the staff must take Elisha's place. Such is the way many are disposed to treat their civic obligations. The pastor of a sister church tells me that the Anti-Saloon League asked, recently, for the privilege of presenting their cause to his

congregation. He gave the petitioners little encouragement. He called his official brethren together expecting, confidently, that they would refuse the desired permission. What was his surprise, therefore, at their unanimous vote in favor of granting the request. And for the following explicit reason: the churchmen said they were really doing little or nothing for the cause of temperance. It was shameful that a Christian church should seem to stand in the light of this vehement gospel of sobriety. They were convicted of inertia. Hence they would do a sort of penance to conscience by welcoming the representatives of this particular League, and by subscribing a few dollars to its propaganda. In other words, they would send Gehazi with their staff when the cause was needing them. Has anybody figured how long it will take to reach the kingdom of temperance by such arm's-length method?

But I have mentioned this incident only as an example of modern attitude toward civic and national obligation. It is pitiful

to think that the political destiny of the next decade may be mainly determined by the supineness of a large class of intelligent voters. What a host of men there are who have no time to spare in the name and for the sake of their country. They are so furiously busy cashing dividends on a glorious citizenship, they seem to have forgotten the need of securing the solvency of the bonds of the nation's future. And it is so very easy to discharge political duty with a cash contribution to the campaign fund of one's party! Also, it is defiling to touch politics at close range. There are plenty of political Ge-hazis: we depute the staff to them for their exploitation. Political jades and hacks are given license to treat the ills of the body politic. Attendance at a primary might cost a meeting of bank directors—with the attendant fee. We are overworked now: let somebody else run the government. Ah, but the grave issues of the present day; the morbid symptoms of civil life; the deadly sunstroke of prosperity will never be adequately treated by

Gehazi and a staff. Our republic will not recover from her present seizures until we go personally to her help.

How this old incident describes also the modes of modern charity! I have come almost to bemoan the multiplication of charitable institutions. Not that we are overdoing the work of helpfulness; rather that we are underdoing it. The incentive to organize societies for the relief of the poor and suffering is not so much found in an excessive regard for the unfortunate as in the desire to be relieved of the drain of personal ministry. To subscribe a generous amount to some agency; to send a salaried officer with our dole; to go to the sick and storm-ridden *by proxy*, is vastly less taxing than personal ministry.

I believe that just here lies a strong argument against anonymous contributions. People in plenty there are who believe in no Christian charity except the tagless sort. Some undeniably benevolent people uniformly refuse to give their names with their benefices. And they quote that scripture which admonishes

not to let one hand know when the other is extended in charity. But the argument is not closed with the citation of scripture. The anonymous method means the elimination of one saving quality in charitable work. The man who gives impersonally not only misses half of the blessing, he gives but half a blessing. Poverty, friendlessness, sorrow—these need not only your staff and your servant; they need “not *yours* but *you*.”

Let me beg you not to delegate your philanthropic enterprises to coachman or maid. No paid agent can adequately administer your kindness. Go, yourself! One's own life must come in contact with the suffering it would relieve. **Only** a warm personality, stretched against the life that is dismal and chill, can breathe hope and power. I know a woman who, in the distribution of her gifts to the poor at Thanksgiving and Christmas, is always accompanied by her children. Being a busy woman, she might adopt some less exacting method. She would probably be pardoned by her friends, and praised

by the Society, if she gave the same amount in cash to the Association for the Distribution of Suppers. But she is an exceedingly wise woman. She has caught, or been caught by, the truth of personal service. And she not only wants her children to see with their own eyes the poverty of others, but she seeks to administer the grace of human fellowship with the goodies and toys.

Abraham Lincoln knew the value of personal investiture. He was not only commander in chief of the army; he was commander and friend in particular. Not content with paid supervision of the wounded in the hospitals, he went through their wards himself, nor with averted face and eyes on the ceiling. At cot after cot he would stop, bending that great, homely face so close that sufferers could read his sympathy in his eyes. Once he paused by the pallet of a lad whose life sands were nearly run. Touched by the piteous appeal of the mere boy, Abraham Lincoln forgot that he was President of the United States and commander in chief of the

army—rather, I should say, he remembered that he was President and commander of individual mothers' boys—and he sat down to hold the lad's hand until the end should come. Far into the night he watched. The last sigh fluttered and was gone. Then with a caress as tender as a woman's and a tear on his rough cheek, he went back to the shadows of his own great struggle. Such acts tell the grade of the man: too great to be merely professional.

One of the special charms of William McKinley was his power of making himself personally felt by friend and associate. They love his memory in Washington to-day, because he came close to so many subordinates. No high fence of officialism shut him away from the people. It may be said that he lost his life as a result of his supreme confidence in the sincerity of his personal contact with men. I saw him once, at a formal White House reception, take into his hands the hands of a common recruit, and shine the man's soul full of the beauty of his own gracious

spirit. The soldier seemed transfigured, and passed on in the crowd to fight for his country—and for William McKinley.

Proxy methods of kindness will not do. Julia Ward Howe once wrote to an eminent senator in behalf of a certain private citizen who had suffered grievous injustice. His reply is worth framing: "I am so much taken up nowadays with plans for the race that I have no time left for individuals." The authoress pasted the letter into her album with the trenchant remark: "When last heard from, our divine Master had not reached that altitude." Jesus invested Himself in individual men. He touched their sick bodies. He drained Himself in their sorrows. He gave His great heart to little children. One of the complaints of His disciples was that He persisted in immediacy of ministry.

Even in our ordinary social life there is too much roundabout and indirection. We have already reached the apotheosis of the engraved invitation. Hardly a social function but can be discharged with

a printed card or a Tiffany sheet. Friends are invited in cold type and thanked in the same. Funeral notices and condolences are intrusted to the engraver's tool, and what print will not do is attempted, forsooth, by flowers and sweetmeats. I believe in such gracious tokens as may be literally touched and handled, but they can never take, and it is abominable that they should try to take, the place of personal contact and exchange. All these makeshifts are simply the extension of the method adopted by Elisha in the text. Souls are needing us; not our servant and staff, but us.

I might, perhaps, profitably pause to apply the suggestion in our homes. There is obviously a growing disposition to shift the domestic burdens to paid shoulders. "I hate housekeeping," says one woman. "I can't be bothered with nursery cares," says another. So a servant is hired to do this, and a subordinate to do that—any way to be rid of the personal drain and exactions of the home. Our rapid multiplication of "family hotels" (God save the

mark!) is simply the economic response to the demand for impersonal relations in the home. I am grateful to remember a home—not simply a shelter or highly organized tarrying place, but a home—in which my mother was queen. She made the whole household royal by giving herself to it. Things were sacred because she touched them. She shortened her days, doubtless, but she left the fragrance of the broken alabaster box.

The same delegated method is being used in our churches. There prevails a disposition to pay larger salaries, to hire all sorts of ecclesiastical helpers, and to relegate the church work to them. Work which twenty-five years ago was royally done by the distributive membership is to-day turned over to paid and professional hands. The first thing most churchmen do when they find a soul needing comfort is to send for the minister to apply it. Or the deaconess is expected to act as the church member's proxy. All of which is a wretched substitute for the sort of personal investment which made

strong the churches of generations past. There is transfer neither of responsibility nor blessing. Men need us. To delegate to some one else the work of leading a soul into the light; to pay a professional helper for the discharge of one's own obligation to his fellow; to send one's staff to lay beside the chilled heart of a sufferer, is to cheat both one's self and the other.

Elisha had to come in person to the Shunammite's household before the stricken lad stirred a muscle or opened an eye. But when Elisha gave himself, the miracle of recovery was wrought. No less expensive method will suffice. We may not send; we must go.

"Herein is love: to strip the shoulders bare,
If need be, that a frailer one may wear
A mantle to protect it from the storm;
To bear the frost-king's breath so one be warm;
To crush the tears it would be sweet to shed,
And smile so others may have joy instead.

"Herein is love: to daily sacrifice
The hope that closest to the bosom lies;
To mutely bear reproach and suffer wrong,
Nor lift the voice to show where both belong;
Nay, now, nor tell it e'en to God above—
Herein is love, indeed, herein is love."

IX
THE HINDERING GOD

And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord,
I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest
in the way against me.—Num. xxii, 34.

THE HINDERING GOD

THE day of this notorious transaction could scarcely have begun auspiciously. Balaam started from home, I fancy, in a mood of distinct unrest. He had too much conscience ever to become thoroughly comfortable in doing wrong. His heart, you recall, was set upon the princely bribe offered him by the king of Moab. He could not drive out the thought of it. Waking or sleeping, he was fairly dazzled by the shimmer of proffered gold. Two intense days and nights he spent in an effort to make the signs turn propitious, to shift the direction of duty, to hypnotize his troublesome conscience. For, while Balaam was sufficiently honorable to be utterly unwilling to go "beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more," he was not honorable enough to refrain from trying to wheedle a different word from God.

At the king's second offer Balaam nearly surrendered. He was torn between cupidity and conscience. He spoke stoutly, to be sure, against the suggested

perfidy. But as if to put the lie to his own pious protestations, instead of dismissing summarily his tempters, he cordially offered them the hospitality of his home until he should have had the advantage of a further interview with God. Perhaps God would change His mind—Balaam would at least give Him an opportunity so to do.

I am sure that those wily Moabite emissaries knew their man. They had no doubt sized him up accurately at their first audience. He was the sort of churchman who says piously, "I can't," but whose whole demeanor adds, "God knows that I would like to!" His declination lacked the note of finality. Ambition and avarice fairly blazed up in his eyes. And the ambassadors from Midian were quite shrewd enough to discover, beneath the veneer of high-sounding platitudes, weak timber. They knew that Balaam needed only adequate persuasion, at the precise point of his particular weakness, to make him their willing victim.

There are men whom the most brazen

bribe-giver would hardly venture to approach a second time, just as there are women to whose high honor the gayest Lothario would hesitate to offer a repeated affront. When a certain citizen declines a proffered drink the incident is closed; but his neighbor says the same thing and is persistently coaxed. The world knows intuitively the difference between the two types of men: it rarely makes mistake. It sets its torch to inflammable material. To which class of men Balaam belonged. He said "No" when he meant "Yes, if possible." His show of righteous indignation was entirely superficial. The man who makes most fuss in declining is the man nearly ready to yield. Too much declamation is a confession of weakness. "Methinks thou dost protest too much."

So we are not surprised to find this protesting prophet en route, the next morning, for Moab. During the night he had apparently succeeded in wheedling out of God a sort of reluctant consent to the journey. And Balaam was now on his way toward the bribe. Not to ac-

cept it, of course! His determination was, professedly, as stiff as ever. He would not veer a hair's breadth from the commandment of the Lord, though Balak were to offer him a houseful of silver and gold. He was simply headed toward Moab. He was going to view the bribe at closer range, to survey what he was relinquishing, to appraise his own self-denial—that was all.

Somewhere in the way occurred the weird transaction to which our text refers. I do not suppose that Balaam saw anything unusual in his path. In fact, he had no eyes for sights along the road. His eyes were blinded with the gold and honor which Balak held out. Whether or not the attendants saw anything unusual, the story does not say; but suddenly his trusty beast stopped unaccountably and turned violently aside. At a smart blow from her master she swung back into the road, but, a moment later, shied again, this time crushing her master's foot against a roadside wall, and rousing him to a most unworthy display of temper. A little

further on the ass staggered and sank to the earth, bringing Balaam and his dignity down together, and winning for herself a most inhuman beating. Balaam's blood was at boiling point. He wished he had a sword to kill the vexatious beast.

Then came the vision. I need not attempt to emphasize the details of the setting. There are some circumstances calculated to lend speech to a member of the brute creation, or at least to translate the inarticulate protest of an ass into a terrific arraignment of its master. Every full-grown soul must have known moods in which even summer winds whisper terrible criminations, and the most familiar sounds become accusing voices. To every conscious evildoer there come moments when his sin seems spelled out in the stars. Charles IX could never deafen himself to the terrible groans of Saint Bartholomew; every flowing stream seemed a torrent of blood, the very eaves of his palace dripped tears, and the most ordinary noises caused him to start and shudder. Tradition says that Herod saw every-

where the face of the murdered John Baptist. It peered in at him through every casement, and stared from every shadowy corner. Any new prophet might be John returned to earth. It is said that Bessus of Greece was observed by his neighbors tearing birds' nests from the trees and passionately destroying the young. When reproved for his cruelty, he replied that he could not bear the twittering of the birds; they always seemed reproaching him for the murder of his father. Lady Macbeth could see the stains, though her hands were washed a thousand times. Every shadow falling across them was a resurgence of guilty blood. Thus, even in its most literal interpretation, this famous dialogue holds nothing to start a smile. Serious minds will find in it the analogue of personal experience. Baalam's conscience was in such a state that even a dumb animal could talk intelligibly to him. He was in the wrong path, and he knew it so well that the meanest member of God's creation might make him cringe with conscious guilt.

Then Balaam's eyes were opened and he saw what hindered him. The "angel of the Lord" was in his path. That very God from whose presence and commandment the prophet was trying to escape was here to block the path which led to dishonor. The Good Spirit opposing the evil drift of Balaam's heart—such was the vision.

What a vision that is—the vision of God striving to make it hard for man to do wrong; the infinite Father working to keep back His children from "presumptuous sins"; the divine Helper piling our path with obstacles that He may give us time to think! Our creed, to be sure, does not always contain the suggestion of a hindering God. We think rather of Him as the great Helper, strengthening our feeble purposes, playing marvelously upon our flagging zeal, stimulating our best endeavors. But when, pray, is God more divinely our Helper than when He blocks the path that leads to disloyalty and shame? That we rarely look for Him thus is nothing against the fact. Neither

did Balaam so look for Him. The last face that the prophet expected to see in his dishonorable path was God's. And when his beast shied and staggered and fell, it never seems to have dawned upon the mind of this guilty prophet even that God was trying to force him back toward moral sanity and safety. God was there, however, as He is in every path of human wrongdoing, admonishing against its folly; letting the transgressor feel beforehand the hurt of his sin; teaching with lessons of pain the terrible logic of evil.

What is conscience but God hindering? Let it be admitted that there are all sorts of consciences. The Lacedæmonians preserved a clear conscience, no doubt, while they were flogging boys to death. Conscience never kept the Carthaginians awake for putting their little children into the red-hot iron of Moloch. There are certain Indian tribes among which thieving and murder are taught as essential to a liberal education. Guiteau professed that he felt no condemnation for his devilish deed, and the murderer of

William McKinley went to execution with the unqualified approval of his own moral sense. Criminal annals contain the most remarkable paradoxes and contradictions of conscience. There are men who would disdain to touch an illegal penny, but who count it no crime to commit adultery. Not long ago I heard a man boasting that an oath never passed his lips, but that he saw no moral harm in drunkenness. It was Jesus's charge against the Pharisees that they worshiped God and robbed widows with equal ardor. Few of us are strangers to such absurdities of conduct. Conscience not only makes "cowards," but "fools," of most of us.

Yet, allowing for all these anomalies and paradoxes, conscience is peculiarly the voice of God. The intuitive flinch of the soul from evil is the divinest safeguard which has been vouchsafed us. Most people can recall the shudder which shook their souls at the first contact with some special vice. We have, perhaps, gotten bravely over the shuddering. It is possible to repeat the action now, with-

out a twinge of inward protest, but we cannot forget the first tremendous revulsion of the soul. It was the soul's revolt at the vision of a hindering God. That we do not hear the voice so plainly now is merely a stinging proof how far we have drifted from moral safety.

Many a woman would have been spared the tragedy of her love and life had she heeded the first instinctive outcry of her own soul against her suitor. Some outraged voice within lifted itself in holy protest. I remember a bride who, on her wedding day, just before the ceremony was performed, threw herself into the arms of her most intimate girl friend, piteously pleading, "Save me! save me!" The bitter sequel to that wedding day proved how much she had to be saved from. And the instinctive recoil of her own womanhood was the stern divine protest against such union. I know women who have married, or have given their love, against the monitions of that inward mentor, but I have never yet known one such woman to be happy in the days after-

ward. Far better to be called prudish and unreasonable, than to disobey the mandates of the soul's monitor. The stanchest safeguard of woman's purity and honor is that voice of the hindering God.

It is quite possible that I am speaking to the present experience of some men and women before me. Satan wears all the robes of light. There are always specious reasons in plenty why one should do the things he wants to do. A soul gets hot on the trail of its own lust, as Balaam did on the path to Moab. If a man could only chloroform his conscience! If he could but silence the uncanny, protesting voice within! If, only, he could be thoroughly glad in the road to indulgence which he has chosen! Let me beg of you not to try it. The worst malady that ever befalls a human being is the searing of conscience. Wiser, a thousand times, to err on the side of unnecessary prudence, than that the soul's sensitive monitor should lose its power to protest.

But God has another way of hindering

the soul which is bent on mischief. I refer to the soul's disappointment with its own evil. It is doubtless true that every man has a propensity to wrong—part of his Adamic inheritance, as the theologians would say; but it is equally true that a man's first experiments in wrongdoing are, ordinarily, a grievous disappointment. Love for the "apples of Sodom" is really an acquired taste. Few could ever declare, concerning their first indulgence in any forbidden fruit, that the fruit was really enjoyable. I can remember distinctly my own first experiment with the "fragrant weed." I had many impressions that smoking must be a delightful habit. I had seen my father indulge in it with evident satisfaction. Most of the men of my acquaintance appeared to take solid comfort in their cigars. I longed to be initiated into the beautiful mysteries of the smoker's elysium. So, like many another precious idiot, at the age of a dozen years, I made the experiment. I provided myself with matches and a cigarette, and I went through the motions

religiously. I had everything but fun out of the experiment. And never shall I forget the chagrin of the moment in which I discovered that the seductive weed had an evil taste.

All of which is simply a parable upon the everyday experiences of life. We should be vastly safer if we rated our first impressions at high value. Now and again, I suppose, a child is born with a taste for beer. He takes the first swallow with evident gusto. But I am sure that with most human beings love for liquor is acquired. Were it not for a sort of moral madness, most drinkers would stop with the first glass. So I might run through the list of common indulgences. Evil shows its fangs, almost invariably, at the initial participation. The first real vision of sin is a terrible disappointment. O, the pity that we should cultivate intimacy with a monster, which, "soon too oft," may make us forget his ugliness!

Or, consider the various restraints of organized society. I am very far from believing that the "voice of the people"

is necessarily the "voice of God"; but I most devoutly believe that our best sentiments, our finest traditions, our most deeply rooted institutions are throbbing with the utterance of God. Our laws have absorbed His Spirit. It was not simply statute law against which Whitaker Wright ran: he had run against God. The God who withstood Balaam on his way to Moab ceaselessly blocks the way of every transgressor. Now and then, I suppose, it is possible for a man to reach a state of such total self-deception that he imagines society is in conspiracy against him. Libertines have given expression to such conviction. But the jolt of organized society is really the protest of God. And the man who finds himself thwarted by public sentiment may well stop and ask which way he is heading. According to the law of averages, it is more likely that the offender is wrong than that the entire community is misguided. It may well be God who, through the offices of human society, stands in the transgressor's path.

I have spoken of some of the familiar guises under which God meets men in their rebellion. I am sure I ought to speak also of those special providential blockings of the path with which nearly every man has had experience. It may be the trail of some commercial venture, or a scheme of political expediency, or the bypath of common devilishness. But, whichever it is, the way seems hopelessly blocked to the moral adventurer. Barriers seem to rise as he approaches them. And the modern Balaam says that "luck is against him." He might far better, and with deeper truth, say, God is against him. This is God's universe. It was organized to foster good and to repress evil. Because God is good, He must oppose every disobedient pilgrim. And an opening of eyes may often reveal what Balaam saw—God hindering.

What wrecks of manhood would be spared if men heeded oftener the harbor-lights hung out by God! Peter need never have fallen so low. Jesus warned him; stood in his path to thwart his weak-

ness. Judas had to jostle God on his way to betray his Master. No soul ever goes to its perdition except against the pleadings and protests of the "Father of Spirits."

X

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF THE UN-
FAITHFUL STEWARD

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Then at my coming I should have received
mine own with interest.—Matt. xxv, 27.

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF THE UNFAITHFUL STEWARD

ONE charge only can be brought against the unfaithful steward in the parable. He had failed to make his investment yield interest. The record does not even suggest that he had misapplied funds, except in so far as a failure to properly invest is a misapplication of funds. Neither does it appear that he had lost a penny of the sum intrusted to him. He merely returned the original amount without interest. "Here is thy pound," he said. But his lord insisted that safeguarding an investment is not enough. Real fidelity in such things must include reasonable gains on the endowment. High honesty ought to be able to show dividends for its stewardship. This man was an unfaithful steward in that he failed to make his trust fund earn somewhat.

Nor was the bearing of the original investor high-handed or arbitrary. The universe is so put together that every investment must justify itself in returns.

No talent is in use when it has simply been buried for safe keeping. The napkin is a shameful place for the Lord's pound. Treasure that does not bear a fair rate of interest must be invested afresh. The world's reasonable requirement is that each investment shall yield income.

This is the meaning of the familiar terms "interest" and "dividend." Men talk about "the prevailing rate of interest," which is simply a consensus of opinion as to the reasonable expectation of the earning power of a dollar. The morning paper each day quotes the value of money "on call" the day before. Investments are pronounced good, and recommended to purchasers, on the basis of their revenue-producing ability. A dollar hoarded is worth absolutely nothing commercially, but a dollar invested in a first mortgage yields five per cent; the same amount deposited in a bank of saving adds four cents to itself, while a similar amount put into a government bond pays its owner three cents. In

other words, the commercial value of a dollar is its ability to earn other dollars. He who invests his money in a gold mine is not satisfied with the sentiment of owning auriferous earth—though in some cases that is the only dividend he is likely to draw. He is willing to forfeit the interest for a few years with the prospect of doubling his money at length. But unless his money begins to be productive, he will be inclined to withdraw the investment, or write it down to profit and loss. The whole business world is constructed on the general assumption that money has a capacity to make more money; to come back to its owner augmented.

One of the most depressing sights of modern New England is the sight of the acres which have gone out of cultivation. Through Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire deserted farms may be counted by the hundred. And I suspect that it will need more than an officially appointed "Old Home Day" to turn the tide. Lands formerly bearing berries and grains have dismally gone to briers and

burdock. The explanation is obvious. Farmers felt that their labor yielded no adequate return. There is a minimum wage below which no man can self-respectingly toil. In the hot competition of modern industry, with Western lands offering ampler harvests per acre, with open doors promising more remunerative return, New England farmers by the hundred have sold out their lands at a mere pittance. They were unwilling to slave away their lives for so meager profit. They insisted that brain and brawn ought to be worth more than bare existence.

What hosts of children have been given a term or two in music! It is commonly accounted the proper thing to spend a few dollars, or hundreds, teaching a youngster the mysteries of the piano. Yet how few grown-up folks can boast of being able to pay any sort of dividends on that original investment! One, perhaps, out of a dozen former music pupils could to-day play the "long meter Doxology." What happened? Evidently the experiment was not accounted profitable.

Parents grew unwilling to keep investing their savings in so uncertain a bank. The child's particular talent was not considered worth cultivation. Young Rubenstein must prove himself such. He must do more than thump out scales and juvenile exercises. Within a reasonable time he must begin to justify the investment of good money; he must begin to play. The public has a cold, unemotional way of appraising such values, and even a doting parent must soon or late be disillusioned. Mankind in general has a stubborn conviction concerning all manner of investments. A gilt-edged security will not continue to pass dividends. Even a talent must bear interest.

But what is true of money, land, and talents is also true of our lives. Each life represents a divine investiture. "We are God's husbandry, we are God's building." He has put His thought into us. He has spent infinite pains in our culture and refining. We are the supreme product of His skill. By direct investment; through centuries of breeding to produce

a rich type; in the various endowments of fellowship and home, He has been toiling on us. And having toiled thus on us, He asks return. This parable is the particular complaint of God against burying His endowment. Fruit is the test. Not leaves, not girth, not height—though life grow tall as the famous trees of Mariposa—not these, but fruit. “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

The supreme achievement of human life, according to the religion of India, was to sink back, at length, into Nirvana. Brahmanism does not require of its votary that he return to God increased; that he bring somewhat with him as earnings on a divine investment. That, indeed, would disturb the equilibrium of the All. Let the steward simply bring his pound wrapped in a napkin and he will be accounted faithful. Such is not the spirit of Christianity, however. To show something gained; to pay interest on opportunity; to yield revenue on God’s pound, is the requirement of Jesus. All

divine investment must bear interest. Life must go into the open market and add to itself. To no other can it ever be said, "Well done."

But this stringent truth has special application to the church. Not flippantly, nor in any sodden commercial sense, I ask what sort of an investment we are. Any particular church, with its five-thousand or hundred-thousand-dollar edifice and its hundred or thousand members—what sort of an investment is it to the Head of the church? Here is a certain sum of money, taken from the pockets of many, diverted from the normal channels of trade and set down on a valuable piece of real estate. There is no question as to the reality of the investment. But is it paying a fair rate of interest? Is it a gold brick or what? Does the church justify itself in the eyes of candid thinkers? Putting entirely aside the sneers and small taunts of the superficial critic, and remembering always that life's supreme values can never be determined by the yardstick or the dollar sign, can it

be honestly said that we are yielding a fair revenue on so large an investment? In the enrichment of the life and strengthening of the morals of the community, are we really worth what we cost?

But more than money has been invested. We must take account of the brain and strength and time which have gone into the church. We must think of the sacrifices represented in its present existence. For five or fifty years we have been doing business at the same stand. Some of the rarest spirits who ever lived have poured lavishly of their treasure into the toil of the particular church. As teachers in the Sunday school, as stewards and trustees, as members of the various committees and organizations, in the pews, in the supper room, on the subscription lists, they have given of their best to this church. Here is a given number of communicants, and another company of Methodist constituents, all coming more or less regularly to church; asked to contribute to its support and its many charities; pressed into the service of its

various activities. It is, indeed, a great investment. Only God has complete record of it. But what sort of interest do we pay on the investment? How much has the Lord's pound really earned?

Not far from a parish of mine stood what is known as an "endowed church." Summer and winter, wet and dry, worship was conducted within its walls in due and ancient form. There might be no worshipers present; none to hear the sermon; none to join in the litany; none to sing the hymns, but the bell rang regularly, and the various ecclesiastical offices were duly performed. The minister was always in his place and religion was honored. So far good, if that were all a church needed to do to justify its existence. But who, except the minister and the sexton, really drew interest on the investment? How much does such a church really count in the life of the city? This is the supreme, the vital question. Some day we shall have to answer it frankly, or it will be answered for us. I am glad to admit that there may be

value in the mere ringing of a church bell. I like to believe that a church steeple may serve a high economy in merely pointing to the stars. It might almost be worth while to erect stately temples merely as signposts along the way. But at best such offices aggregate a pretty meager rate of interest. How much higher rate does our own church pay? Are we what the world calls "a good proposition"? We ought to be, God knows we ought to be, or the Head of the Church might profitably direct a withdrawal of the investment.

Let me suggest certain particulars, in terms of which we may perhaps answer the question: Beginning with ourselves. We of the church ought to be live witnesses of the spiritual profit of the investment. The church member should carry around him evidence of his moral gains, as the average man of material prosperity wears in his apparel and general bearing some token of his success. Merely to contribute to the furtherance of church activities; to sit in the accus-

tomed place on Sunday ; to appreciate the sermon and compliment the choir—this is by no means enough. The church is not an art gallery to be gone through for the sake of going through it. Neither is it a temple of music for whose performances people buy tickets, chiefly to express their approbation of such things. Still less is it a gymnasium in which folks congregate to applaud the moral development and dexterity of others. Its art is for the frequenters to carry away in their souls. Its music serves high purpose only by starting up the bells of our higher nature. Its equipment is intended to harden our own spiritual fibers ; to train us in moral athletics “till we all come in the unity of the faith, unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Measuring results in such terms, what has the church done for us? Every man of us ought to be able to go back to business with a new spirit ; every woman to find a marching song for her hard pilgrimage ; every soul to turn from the

sanctuary with a veritable shout of deliverance, if the church is accomplishing in us "that whereunto it was sent." The temple hour must pay interest in enlargement of spirit. Why should one come at all, unless the seed of the kingdom bears the "fruits of the Spirit" in the broad acres of every day?

It is said that a London storekeeper had in the rear of his store a single beautiful painting. It was partly concealed by a curtain. Few of the frequenters of the shop guessed its presence. But one day a girl from the streets, one of the scarlet women of the city, caught a furtive glimpse of the picture, and while the storekeeper was busy with other customers she slipped, unnoticed, past the curtain. Within that veil she lingered, transfixed, while a new power stirred her. Then she came out and passed on into the street. Next time she came the storekeeper noticed a fresh ribbon on her neck. Again she slipped into the rear of the store and stood reverently before the canvas. When next he saw her, her hands were clean

and her dress was tidied. Thus little by little the old life fell away. She had been transformed by the power of that communion. Our church is such a quiet corner, apart from business, where hangs the marvelous pattern of goodness; nay, where stands "the King in His beauty." The jostling world has no time, or makes no time, to stop and gaze. But we have claimed the privilege of passing within the veil, and we must needs prove, by the fresh cleanliness of our hands and the refining of our conduct, what we have seen and felt. It suffices not merely to keep the traditions of the fathers. The church must help build larger lives. It stands for those unique qualities of which the world is in direst need. Unless we can show the acquisition of these qualities, who shall guess that we have been apart at all? who shall say that the Lord's pound has gained anything by investment in us?

Or, let us think of the church in its social aspect. It is not enough that we come and worship together. Fellowship

which ends at the church door is abortive. I am convinced that we have not yet realized the social obligations we have one to another. Let it not be rejoined that there is society enough outside the church. So there is, of a certain sort. There is plenty of foam and froth. We have whist parties and bowling clubs galore, but the church stands for a distinct fellowship, a fraternity of helpfulness, the comradeship of spirit. And how shall we actualize a fellowship of that sort unless we know one another's lives? As it is now, we scarcely know one another's names. Many are comparative strangers to one another. To be sure, some people prefer to come alone and go unspoken. I have known a man to withdraw his membership from the church because of the inveterate Methodist practice of shaking hands. I am sorry he felt so. I admire and honor the man. Evidently he struck the wrong church. But I am bound to say that where one leaves our fellowship on account of our too much handshaking, dozens would come to us if we practiced

it more. The power of old Methodism lay not more truly in its preaching of the Cross than in its cordial grasp of the hand. "I have been coming to your church for years," said a woman recently, "and no one has ever spoken to me." It ought not to be possible to say such a thing of a Methodist church. There is grace in a Christian greeting. Let people be frosted at the edges, we ought to be able to break the ice with our hands or melt it with our cordiality. We need look to the social earning of the Lord's pound.

And the public *morale*, how much do we help it? How far are we strengthening the foundations of civic righteousness? In the interest of good government, what are we worth to the community? A Chief of Police asked me recently if there were not some way in which the real sentiment of the church might be brought to bear on a certain moral issue. Many a public official will confess that he would be glad to serve the higher sentiment of the citizens, could that sentiment be crys-

tallized in practical form. It is only a truism to affirm that we could close the saloons if we wanted to. A certain successful vote-getter declared, frankly, that he did not care for the church vote. Give him the liquor vote, he said: it could be depended on to be cast according to its own interest. What is the use of pretending to stand for righteousness unless we march against some citadels of public evil? Every wrongdoer in the community ought to feel hampered and checkmated by the church. The mills of iniquity grind out a famous grist. They pay good interest on their investment. As their great antagonist, what rate do we pay?

A definite evangelism—are we strong on that? The unique business of the church is to build souls into the kingdom, to add daily “such as are being saved.” The prime question is not as to our retention of the old-fashioned altar, or as to the use of the “mourner’s bench”; the prime question is whether we are helping our neighbor into the light. Nor is it peculiarly a question for the preacher

only. It is for the entire membership. His responsibility and theirs is the same. To lead one's neighbors to the majesty of God's mercy; to inspire fresh ideals in jaded lives; to make recruits for the Grand Army of Righteousness—this is the paramount business of the church. What success are we having? Does it bear a fair ratio to the investment.

I have suggested that the investment is already great. Let me add the conviction that it is not yet great enough. There is such a thing in commercial circles as "protecting an investment." A man puts in additional money to save what is already involved. Lawson, in his story of *Frenzied Finance*, tells, dramatically, of a moment in the history of the Westinghouse Company when the company must have failed but for increased capital. One of the most famous and profitable of modern gold mines was abandoned by its original owner. He invested half a fortune, and failing to strike a lead he stopped work. He had no mind to send good money after bad, he said. But a

new company saw the prospects of the property, put in another fortune atop of the first, protected his investment for their own interest, and pays enormous dividends to-day. A certain eminent singer reached the point in her preparatory work at which she felt she had missed her vocation. She had spent years in study and could afford to give no more. She could never be great, it seemed. But she was persuaded to adopt a new method, and, doing so, has become one of the world's famous vocalists. She protected her investment. I believe we are at that point in the history of the church. We have spent much, but we must put in still more of time, of blood, of devotion, before we can reap the reward of our labor. To stop too soon is to fail.

XI

THE THORN AS AN ASSET

Out of weakness were made strong.—Heb.
xi, 34.

THE THORN AS AN ASSET

HE must be bold who flouts an axiom. For, by its very terms, an axiom is so self-evidently true that its denier merely stultifies himself. Fancy the Freshman who should venture to challenge the validity of a geometric axiom simply because his problem failed to prove. Mathematics and logic begin with axioms. We should hardly know what to do without them. Unless, for example, it were immediately apparent and universally accepted that the "whole is greater than any of its parts," how should we ever prove anything?

Let us look at this particular axiom again—"The whole is greater than any of its parts." It is obviously true of apples. It is undeniably valid in geometry and conic sections. It might seem, at first sight, to be universally true. But I have discovered that a proposition may be axiomatically true of apples and terribly false to the deepest experiences of life. In the case of this familiar axiom I may suggest ranges of experience in

which it does not hold at all. Jacob had such an experience at Peniel. He had battled all night, and at a touch from his heavenly antagonist strength left him. "The hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him." Physically, he was a broken man. He would have confessed himself disqualified for the largest victory. But in sheer desperation he clutched the victorious angel, and, clinging, discovered that a man with a wounded thigh may be more of a prince with God than a soul unhampered. He won his supreme victory in weakness. Apparently defeated, he had yet prevailed with the Almighty. God blessed the crippled wrestler. And Jacob found that for the vaster purposes of life a part may sometimes be greater than the unmutated whole.

Gideon learned the same lesson at Gil-ead. By divine suggestion he did what no modern general would dare to do without fear of court-martial. He let twenty-two thousand of his army return to their wives and families. And finding

the remaining ten thousand still too large a company for his purpose, he put them all through a rather absurd test at the riverside. Of the ten thousand who stopped to drink, three hundred lapped the water from their hands as improvised cups. And with three hundred thus quaintly chosen Gideon won his most decisive battle. For, in the issue, three hundred men, divinely selected and commissioned, proved a heavier thunderbolt than the original thirty-two thousand could possibly have been. Part was greater than the unsifted whole.

So discovered the poor widow who shared with Elisha her last morsel. So scanty was her store she might have been pardoned for not wishing to divide it. She was gathering a few sticks over which to cook the scrapings of the barrel, when she met Elisha. Somewhat in the prophet's bearing compelled obedience, and ignoring, apparently, the mandate of motherhood, forgetting her own hunger-cry, she shared her last food with the prophet. Then a beautiful thing happened, and the

woman, who had spared not her own poverty in ministry to the need of another, found the meal and oil constantly replenished. For days three lives were sustained on the marvelous increase of the handful. Nor until the famine ended did the meal waste or the oil fail. Part proved greater than the whole.

The world knows Paul's agony to be rid of his thorn. Thrice he besought the Lord that it might depart from him. He could not see how God could use a defective instrument. He felt disqualified and undone by infirmity. He craved strength that he might the better serve the kingdom. The struggle was fearful—one of those agonies out of which men come with hair blanched in a night. But in the issue Paul learned to call his thorn an asset. By a paradox of wisdom, God's strength was to be made perfect in weakness. Paul even went so far as to declare that he would glory in his infirmities if, thereby, the power of Christ might rest upon him. Paul's peerless ministry is the triumph of the bruised reed. To all the

ages he is a splendid lesson that part may be greater than the unhurt whole.

But these are merely random illustrations from a Book which is full of them. What are the Beatitudes but a pledge of losses turned gains; of power compacted of weakness; of supremacies wrapped up in defeats? Jesus is Himself the crowning example. It is not the mark of a mailed hand, but the mark of the pierced Hand which He has left upon the centuries. The Man who was so bruised and disfigured that, as Isaiah said, "we hid as it were our faces from Him," has become the "Captain of our Salvation." In the travail of His soul He has found His conquests. From a gibbet He has lifted the race. He stooped infinitely that He might conquer forever.

But the reversal of our familiar axiom is not merely a truth of the Bible. It is just as true outside as in it that "one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." "The stone cut out of the mountain" continues to fill the whole earth with marvel and surprise.

Not simply in the gospel is it written that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." The whole universe burns with the same truth. History is the chronicle of such paradoxes. Life everywhere, truly lived and interpreted, declares that the greatest strength is always born in weakness; that, for the most royal purposes of life, part may be greater than the whole.

Who would think of taking a cutting from tree or vine unless he believed that, for the uses of orchard and vineyard, part may be worth more than the whole? Who would spend two thousand dollars a ton in the reduction of pitchblend to radium unless two decigrams of the latter were more valuable than a ton of the former? Nobody would ever smelt gold ore unless part were greater than the whole. A flute is only part of the original stick, a mutilated piece of ebony or rosewood, but the rifts and holes are the making of the flute. And when the boring is complete, and some musician breathes his soul through it, who shall say the part is

not greater than the unmutilated whole? The varied operations of the industrial world are rich in examples of strength perfected in weakness; of power resting upon frailty; of victories snatched from defeat.

It was a feeble folk which landed at Plymouth Rock three centuries ago. Not much besides poverty and weakness had they—save convictions. Europe felt no appreciable loss, probably, when the Mayflower set sail. In fact, that departure was really a matter of good riddance. Europe had no room for such disturbers of public peace. Yet what strength was added to that weakness! That little human fragment, broken off from Europe, had greater promise and potency than the whole of Europe besides. America has “leavened the whole lump” of the nations.

Just so all the great reforms have worked their way. Papal Rome sneered once at the little company of zealots who dared to think thoughts without apology. Men are still living who can remember

days when abolitionists might almost be counted on one's fingers. Their own generation was chiefly sorry that such men as Peabody, Wilberforce, and Howard should persist in devoting good brains to the leadership of forlorn hopes. We have ventured sometimes to commiserate Neal Dow and Frances Willard, and to count the strength of the temperance cause in the number of prohibition ballots. But all such movements are born small. They suffer all the scorn and odium of weakness. At first they are merely thorns in the side of personal complacency and public policy. Only a daring prophet, "of imagination all compact," would venture to predict great sequels from such beginnings. But He who used a stone in a lad's hand for the overthrow of a giant has a beautiful way of giving the kingdom to apparent weakness. He has marvelous skill with remnants. Into His temple He builds the "stone which the builders rejected." By the imposition of His power part may indeed be greater than the whole.

But this truth has even more intimate bearings on our personal lives. It was long ago noticed that genius often borders on insanity. Dryden said:

“Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.”

The famous Frenchman Diderot declared of certain great spirits who had helped to make universal history, that “they believed themselves inspired, and were insane.” We often speak of “poetic *frenzy*.” Lombroso says that “genius, the only human power before which we may bow the knee without shame, has been classed by certain alienists as on the confines of criminality, . . . a variety of insanity.” What are these statements but observations that power is often grafted into weakness. If it be only the high-strung, neurotic people, only ill-balanced souls like Keats and Carlyle, who get great visions and produce real literature, what is that but another way of saying that weakness may be better than strength—a part greater than the whole? Much as we may admire well-rounded manhood

and symmetrical character, the fact is that the world's greatest work has been done by one-sided, wild-eyed, often frenzied souls. It is no use to apologize for Luther's intolerance and Byron's melancholy and Burns's impecuniosity. Great constructive geniuses are rarely the most comfortable citizens. We might as well have done expecting poets and musicians of the first order to be first-class business men also. Their soil is too superheated and rich to produce tame blossoms. It is out of weakness that they have been made strong.

A recent writer calls attention to the world's "prison literature." Boethius wrote his famous *Consolations of Philosophy* in prison. It is said that Cervantes produced his masterpiece, *Don Quixote*, in a galley at hard labor. Walter Raleigh compiled his *History of the World* in the Tower of London. Bunyan wrote his immortal allegory in Bedford jail. Paul indited his greatest letter in a Roman dungeon. In all of which there is no real ground for surprise. Seldom is a great work done

by unplagued spirits. Prison may forge the fetter which genius turns into a wing. Opposition wrings out the rare juices of the soul. The gusts which rack the body do but fan its most sacred fire. Many of the clearest brains and richest spirits have testified that their darkness brought out the stars. Until it is cut the diamond is merely a pebble. It is the trimming of edges which makes it flash. Yet when the stone is cut who shall say that part is not greater than the whole?

The world admiringly remembers Epicurus, the slave philosopher. "Slave, maimed in body, beggar through poverty, and dear to the Immortals"—such is Browning's description. Yet we have not always realized the value of the maiming and the hardship to the beauty of his philosophy. Who that has ever read Charles Lamb has failed to be sweetened with the exhalation of that fragrant spirit? A subtle, indefinable aroma was in the presence of the man. Suffering yielded it. For he had relinquished the love of the woman he loved as he loved

life. Warned by the terrible tragedy of his sister's insanity, he was afraid to marry. The ancestral malady might any day seize him. See him with his sister Mary, hurrying, hand in hand, through bypaths to the asylum before the frenzy should seize her again. Do you wonder that he could write at all? I wonder, rather, if, without such supreme agony, he could have written as he did. Robert Hall, one of the world's greatest preachers, was a victim of spinal trouble. And it is said that he often clutched the desk in sheer agony while he reached his greatest heights of eloquence. Let no one say he preached in spite of pain; let it be said pain helped him to preach.

Thousands upon thousands have reverently gathered around the couch of Stevenson, blessing him for the beautiful things which fell from his pen, and for the soul which shone through them all. I wonder if we remember to bless the pain and weariness which had fortified his soul. Socrates thought of suffering as a midwife, always present at the birth of great-

ness. Dr. Lorenz, the famous dry surgeon, would never have found his special vocation but for the affliction of a skin disease which rendered wet surgery impossible for him. Gounod, the famous composer, was invariably attacked by a strange malady when he was about to produce his finest lines. Yet illness did not *spoil* the music; perhaps it *made* the music.

"My God, I have never thanked thee for my thorn!" cried one of our modern prophets. O, for moments of vision of the value of the thorn! When Salmasius assured Milton that blindness must be counted evidence of the divine displeasure, Milton replied that his "blindness was only the twilight of God's wings which overshadowed him." Two continents have been thrilled by the story of Helen Keller. Deaf, dumb, and blind, trebly cursed in body, she has nevertheless acquired such ripe knowledge of art, literature, and science as would put most of us to shame. A year ago she graduated from college with honor. And her physician

says that she "knows nothing of the unkindness, hostility, narrow-mindedness, and wickedness of the world. She will never see any but the noblest side of human nature." For such vision one is almost ready to wish himself blind and dumb. Surely part may be greater than the whole.

But let the truth become our own. Life has been a slow robber to some of us. Death has put out the light of life at a stroke. We have been pinched and bruised. And is that all? Has no strength been grafted upon our weakness? Is life merely diminished by pain? It ought, instead, to be increased and enriched. Graces never come save by refining. We should be less than we are, less kind, less pitiful, less patient; more crude, more unwholesome, more unendurable, had our cup always borne nectar. Ah, strength of soul is still "made perfect in weakness!" Part of life may be taken away, but the part which remains may be greater than the whole.

I must not drop the theme, however,

without sounding a warning note. It is never by voluntary mutilation that life becomes fruitful. God has no blessings for needless renunciation. Only to inevitable weakness does He add His strength. Gratuitous martyrdom is neither beautiful nor worth while. It is not the blood of that sort of martyrs which has been the "seed of the church." Life ruthlessly diminished has missed the direction of glory. Moreover, it is only the thorn touched by God which becomes an asset. Suffering by itself is simply suffering. Apart from the ministry of God the unbruised reed is best. Only by an overcoming grace and an anointing Spirit is part ever greater than the whole.

XII
HALF MIRACLES

And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. . . . And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.—Exod. iv, 3, 4.

HALF MIRACLES

IT sounds almost like a "nursery tale"—this turning of the rod into a serpent, and its retransformation into a rod. As a consequence, some exceedingly wise people have been pleased to laugh at the whole transaction. They have also improved the occasion to take a fling at the Book in which such records appear. And they have smiled, patronizingly, upon us who continue to base explicit hopes upon, and find our rule of life in, so childish a volume.

To all of which levity there is this to be said, that a further study of the passage might save the laugh. Serious students do not sneer, to-day, even at 'nursery tales.' Men of scholarship as profound as that of Max Müller and Baring-Gould have devoted no small part of their genius to an exposition of the meaning of such stories. Thanks to a generous modern library upon the subject, we know that the "fairy tales" which were told to us, and which we retell to wide-eyed children,

represent the naive faith of long-gone ages; and even our jingling "nursery rhymes" are but modern survivals of the deathless gropings and hungry yearnings of the human spirit after the truth of things. At bottom there is nothing in Red Riding Hood or the Sleeping Beauty or the Giant Killer to provoke our risibles. The warm blood of primitive races still flows in such tales.

Still less will earnest and reverent students discover in this graphic narrative of Moses any occasion for a laugh. Personally, I do not care how far the story may be historical. Whether the incident actually occurred in the mode described, or whether it is a photograph of the inner drama of a human soul, is of relatively little moment to me. What interests me more is the meaning of the story. Scratch the surface and you will find, beneath, that which has kept the story alive. It is concerned with the shaping of a man's convictions and destiny. This scene, so artlessly sketched, was burned into the soul of Moses.

For it occurred, as will be recalled, at a moment when this ancient worthy stood shivering in the conscious presence of God, and pleading to be released from his duty. He did not want to go. The message choked him. He saw, as in a magnifying mirror, all the inevitable dangers of the task assigned. Shrinking in conscious weakness, and disabled by his own fears, in an amalgam of modesty and fright, he, like many a later prophet, besought God to let him off. And this startling transformation of his rod, the blanching and restoration of his hand, were symbols of the Power which summoned him, and would go with him. He who had commissioned would qualify. Let Moses begin his work and he would see ordinary instruments turned to extraordinary uses. Not alone, but in Supreme Company; charged with a message which would yet burn the fetters from his tongue; carrying with him the rod upon which a double miracle had been performed—thus was Moses to go to his people and to Pharaoh's court.

But it is the double miracle upon the rod which I want particularly to notice at this time. This celebrated rod dismayed before it comforted its owner. The story says that when the rod was first transformed into a serpent Moses fled in terror. His response to the miracle was fright. He wanted to get away from the work of his own hands. He could not bear the sight of his own plain rod transformed. Pitiful display of weakness was it, indeed! A people's champion fleeing from the very object on which God was revealing His power—there is little enough inspiration in such a spectacle. But God called Moses back, bade him take the terrifying object in his hand, and in a tardily brave hand the fearsome serpent became a rod again.

What a vivid parable it is! To be afraid of the result which God has empowered us to secure; to be at the point of flight from the revelation of His most gracious power; to need teaching to grip one's own altered rod and thus turn it back into a rod again—how well it all

describes the ignoble but characteristic weakness of every age!

Every student of American history will recall the dismal, anxious days which succeeded the surrender at Yorktown. The colonists had won. They had achieved the result toward which their consciences had been driving them. England had been beaten at her own game, and the colonists were free. But with the dying away of the boom of war a sort of dumb agony settled upon the souls of many patriots. They had won, but what? They stood aghast at their own handiwork. The treasury was bankrupt. The Union was merely a group of States, mutually jealous of each other, and ready to fly at each other's throats at a moment's notice. So many terrifying shapes rose from the ashes of revolution that stout hearts quailed. The rod had turned into a serpent under their very eyes, and many were afraid of their own work. Those were anxious, foreboding days. Many a colonist, like this terrified Moses, would fain have run away from the situation.

But there were brave hearts, and stout hands, too—the Washingtons and Hamiltons. They gripped heroically the problems of the new republic. And under such strong, believing grasp, the serpent became a rod again.

I feel sure there must have been depressing moments in which Luther was almost sorry for his break with Rome. So dead in earnest had he been, so dominated by an immense conviction, so utterly oblivious to any but the voice of spiritual freedom, that he had been swept beyond all intended bounds. The fever of combat kept him up as it does the soldier in battle. He knew neither weariness, terror, nor consequences. But, in the aftermath, he would have been scarcely human had he been other than appalled at certain results of the Reformation. Some of his converts made quite as poor Protestants as they had Catholics. Emancipation from ecclesiastical fetters carried men into a sort of religious debauch. To be free from Rome involved issues as tremendous and fateful as those of Rome

herself. But, in spite of disheartenment, Luther, like Moses, went back to his task. He gripped the serpent of Antinomianism. He threw all his genius into constructive churchmanship. And the serpent of spiritual anarchy became a rod again.

Take that most intense scene of Jesus's struggle in the garden. What was the agony? Why should He shrink, unless, for a moment, He was staggered by the magnitude of His own task? He had been making the supreme experiment of the ages. He had set the divine ideal so high that men fell back from trying to reach it. He had been training a handful of men to embody His doctrine and then to preach it. And so little had this dozen disciples caught the spirit of His ministry that at the end of three years of training the best-loved one of them wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy their enemies. While Jesus agonized in the garden Judas covenanted to betray Him. And, a stone's throw distant, the three whom He had asked to watch with Him an hour were asleep. Small wonder that He wavered

for an instant. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" He could scarcely have been an example to twenty centuries unless, in that terrible moment, He had flinched. The rod had turned serpent and Jesus started back in anguish. But only for a moment. Then He gathered the forces of that divinest Manhood and almost clutched the cup of bitterness. "The cup that my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" And in the grasp of that pierced Hand the serpent became the "rod and staff which comfort" us.

But I have spoken thus far of this truth only as the truth of history. It is written in letters of fire. But it is more than the truth of history. It is the truth of to-day and the truth for our personal lives. Consider it in its application to one of the most vexing of our modern problems—what we shall do with the negro. Forty years ago it appeared that all we had to do was to emancipate him. That single issue blinded abolitionists' eyes to all others. But it has not taken forty years to discover the other issues. There are

earnest souls who to-day stand aghast at the results of abolition. I hear it frequently said that emancipation was a terrible mistake; that the negro can never be made an integral part of our national life; that he is an alien and so must remain. This rod has turned serpent and has already stung us. Some would solve the problem by running away from it, or inducing the negro to run away from us. Thank God, then, for men as brave of heart and as clear of vision as President Roosevelt; men to dare to insist that no citizen shall be blacklisted merely because his skin is black, or favored for as poor a reason; men who declare that the problem is to so deal "with the man of one color as to secure to him rights that no one would grudge him if he were of another color." In hands so wise, yet firm, the serpent will be retransformed into a rod. This is no time to run from responsibility; it is time to employ our best brains and our largest charity. The negro is here. He is here by compulsory invitation. And he is here to stay. He must

be reckoned with. Abolition has proven a miracle with fangs. But that is because it is only half a miracle. We must address ourselves to the other half—the retransformation of the serpent into the rod. Not by deportation, not by intermarriage, not by any factitious and inequitable equality, but by teaching trades to the negro, by helping him find a place or make a place for himself—this way the path leads.

Take the problem of the “trust.” Modern combinations of capital are a modern miracle. The old-fashioned commercial rod has been marvelously transformed. Lawson in his terrific arraignment of “Standard Oil,” the Supreme Court in its recent decision against the “Beef Trust,” New York City in its findings against the telephone and lighting monopolies, the shocking practices of the “Equitable Life,” have been revealing the fangs of this modern serpent. We are much afraid of the sting. Many timid souls would greatly prefer to run away to some land where this sort of “wicked cease from troubling

and the weary are at rest." We need a stern voice to recall us to the grapple. It is no use denying that the present stage of industrial progress marks an advancement. Even in our trust-ridden age we are nearer than ever before to the realization of human brotherhood. But half a miracle is little better than none if we leave it half done. We have yet to perform the other half. Combinations of brain and money must be made not to serve the few, but the many. From competition to consolidation—that is, from the rod to the serpent; from consolidation to coöperation—that is, from the serpent back to the rod—such is the process.

Take the gospel of bombs and dynamite and dagger which is being preached in Russia to-day. We heard the hiss of the serpent in the assassination of McKinley. Anarchy has spawned in our streets. And we may sometimes wonder what government is safe, what man secure. Let it be replied that peace is unassured until the miracle has been completed. The rod of human freedom, thrown to the ground,

has become a serpent. Liberty, to-day, has grown fangs. To rest there would be supreme tragedy. But by a more equitable adjustment of human conditions, by assuring to every man a "square deal," by allowing a generous place for the weak and incompetent, we shall yet turn the alarming serpent back into a rod.

Or think for a moment of the prevalence of skepticism. We are staggered at the liberties freethinkers take with our faith. There seems no limit to the rending of creeds and smashing of ideals. Such men as Blatchford, of England, and Elbert Hubbard, of East Aurora, are samples of the modern "faith-buster." But let it never be forgotten that our age has diligently taught men to think. Let us recognize the miracle of progress from a day when Galileo was shut up for daring to look at the stars, Copernicus exiled for thinking great thoughts, and Roger Bacon suppressed for giving glimpses of science. It is no small boon to be able to live in an age when a thing has to be somewhat better than merely old, in order

to be considered holy; and faith is no longer "the belief of that which one knows to be untrue." But to halt there is to do what Moses did when he fled in terror from the work of his own hand. We have seen the rod transformed into a serpent; we must retransform it into a rod. By patient grasp on eternal verities, by indicating the limitations and inaccuracies of human vision, and by helping all eager feet to find the "Rock of Ages" we shall yet be able to make free thought serve God. No truth can weaken the throne of the God of truth. All truth is God's. It is only half-truths that we need to fear. When men grasp truth in its wholeness it will but glorify the Creator. Half-truths enslave or affright. The whole "truth shall make" us "free."

But I desire to bring this scripture analogy into the domain of our homes, and also of our personal lives. The supreme parental problem is to build boys and girls into a full-grown individuality. All the best ministries of the home circle are calculated to help adolescent life to expand.

Youth must develop and grow until in growth and development it comes to its real self. Not by being "cabined and cribbed," but by having the struggling powers of youth set free, shall children best be helped. But see what the process involves. One of the first phenomena of unfolding manhood and womanhood is a restiveness under, and a throwing off of, restraint. Let church attendance cease to be made compulsory for the young folks, and a multitude of them will cease to come. Let them have the liberty of their evenings and the disposition of their time, and they will probably employ the newly acquired freedom to hurt themselves. Let the supreme substitute of love for commandment be made, and many a lad will simply trample love under his feet. He may sting love, whereas he would stand in awe of Sinai. Such experience makes the grief of countless households. What shall be said? Simply this, that the miracle of education is but half performed. The rod has been transformed into a serpent from which fathers and mothers

start back appalled. The danger just at this point is in relinquishing the struggle. As certainly as children have been helped to throw off certain restraints must they be helped to assume others. For every law outgrown a new law must be substituted. Let no father or mother flinch. Not in helpless terror at the work of our own hands, but in a patient, brave grapple with the new problem, let us show the "more excellent way." The problem is to win one's own children to sanity and safety. Innocence has been turned into lawlessness; it must be retransformed into virtue.

Or take this truth as it comes out in one's own life. Many a Christian has reached the point of enlarging experience at which he stands almost aghast at the changes in himself. Never would he have believed he could come so far in a few months or years. I speak now not of moral drift, but of changes of sentiment, of broadening of spirit, of refusals to call that which is foreign unclean—all those alterations of viewpoint which come to a

growing soul. They constitute a startling revelation of one's self. They make for bewilderment, often. One can almost hear the hiss of the serpent of danger in his present experience. He feels in his blood the burn of some insidious poison. The trouble is that the miracle of transformation is only half complete. And it must be completed not by fleeing from the sight of its incompleteness, but by grappling it with heroism. Let a man in such mood get fresh hold of himself. Let him learn to put harness on the new truth he has won. Thus shall he make it serve the higher uses of life.

What an altered thing was the rod as it lay afterward in Moses's hand! It had been serpent, but had become his own rod again. Never could it be the old, commonplace thing. It had been touched divinely and was sanctified for all future years. It was to be identified with the most graphic incidents of the Exodus. And how different and far more marvelous a thing does life become, after it has been through the double miracle of trans-

formation and retransformation—from safety to peril and back to seasoned strength! No truth is ever quite so sacred as that which has been once “crushed to earth.” Faith lost and regained by Romanes meant more than a faith which had never been put in jeopardy. Lolita Armour, restored from hopeless cripplehood by Dr. Lorenz, was doubly dear. The joy of recovery—Jesus said it was the surpassing joy of heaven, greater “over one sinner that repenteth than ninety and nine . . . which need no repentance.” Let us not be content until life’s vicissitudes spell out this meaning—the truth of the completed miracle, the lesson of the rod reclaimed and retransformed.

XIII

THE OTHER MAN'S PORTION

Thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, . . . neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger.—Lev. xix, 9, 10.

THE OTHER MAN'S PORTION

It is quite the fashion to plume our age upon its vast accessions of wisdom. To hear us talk one might almost imagine that the bulk of human knowledge were of recent birth. Attention is ceaselessly called to the new discoveries in science and the practical arts. The fact, however, is that comparatively little wisdom is new. What we are pleased to call "new" is more frequently the "old," reborn. Many of our much-bepraised modern discoveries are only rediscoveries. Leaving out of account the brilliant realm of technical invention, it may be doubted if the facts bear out our loud boasts of unprecedented progress. There are those who say that the human intellect has never soared higher than it did in Plato and Aristotle; or, say, in Bacon and Descartes. Modern ages have hardly matched the pyramids of Egypt and the Coliseum at Rome. The striking statue which guards the entrance to New York harbor is a puny figure compared with the famous Colossus at

Rhodes. The famous torso of an ancient sculptor still mocks the skill of the modern chisel.

And, then, to offset certain of our boasted discoveries, some former arts have been lost with the passing of time. We are utterly unable to reproduce the famous purple of Tyre. Ancient bronze is still a mystery for modern workers. And many a modern engineer, with all the marvelous devices of modern applied mechanics at his disposal, would hesitate to take the contract for Cheops, or the Temple at Thebes. Notwithstanding our vaunted gains in human skill and understanding, we can still learn a host of true and useful things from ancient masters. Wise voices speak not the less wisely for coming across thousands of years. And our modern age can still afford, occasionally, to sit in the school of olden times and learn.

Take, as a notable instance, ancient Israel. To assume that we have so far outstripped her standards as to be totally beyond them is scarcely fair to the facts.

The ancient Hebrew is very far from deserving our intellectual pity or our moral scorn. He knew a lot of things that we can well afford to relearn. I doubt if a more equitable land system than the Mosaic was ever devised. There were in practice, also, sanitary and hygienic principles so well conceived as to win the applause of modern experts in these departments. The Jew guarded the moral issues of life and sanctity of the family bond by the most stringent enactment. He made such systematic provision for the poor as would put to shame our latest charity organizations.

Take, as an example, this suggestive scripture: "Thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy fields, . . . neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard." Here in the simplest terms is the enunciation of a principle of immense import and of almost infinitely various application. No devout Hebrew dared to gather the entire harvest of his industry. According to the marvelous code by which he lived, the corners of every har-

vest field must be left standing. Such grain as was scattered in the operation of gathering, and in whose economic administration the profit of modern farming might be said to reside, must remain where it fell. Vines must not be stripped: a few clusters must, invariably, be suffered to hang. This residue of field and vine was for the stranger and the poor.

Nor was there any superfluous merit in thus leaving the corners unharvested. If charity be synonymous with freewill offering, there was not even charity in the practice. Somehow it had been borne in upon the conscience of ancient Israel that so much of the owner's property did not really belong to him. It had never been his for a moment. Nor could it be appropriated by him without the grossest injustice. All the courts, from the court of heaven to the lowest court of the land, were against him. The last few clusters on the vine and the corners of his wheat field belonged to his indigent neighbors or the "stranger within his gates."

It sounds almost like the programme

of some advanced modern Socialist. It is as revolutionary as anything Henry George ever said, or the sociological tenets of Prince Krapotkin. Yet it is only a fragment of an ancient civilization whose wisdom we have often affected to despise. The plan was actually worked among the Hebrews of three thousand years ago. And so deep was the impression made by it upon human institutions that, within the last century, a famous English judge was called upon to decide whether or not the leavings of harvest could really be claimed by the owner. What vexing problems would be solved and what human relationships would be immeasurably sweetened, could we go back far enough to relearn that ancient lesson! The last clusters of the vine and the corners of the harvest field; the part of my possession which does not belong to me; the other ownership in that which we are pleased to call "our own"—how full is the thought of suggestion!

Take it in its most natural and obvious application. Modern "charity" would be

simply revolutionized by such a principle. Most people look upon "charity" as a purely voluntary affair, an act of superfluous virtue. We may be charitably inclined or we may not; we may exercise the prerogative of helpfulness in one instance and withhold it in another. But if there be one thing we stoutly resent in such affairs it is the bare intimation of a real claim on the part of the suppliant. Such assumption we cannot allow. The beggar might as hopefully come at us with a club as with the assertion of his *right* to a part of our competence. We wish it to be distinctly understood that we are the absolute masters of our own affluence, and that whatever we are pleased to bestow upon our less favored brothers is an act of pure grace.

No wonder it is so hard for the self-respecting unfortunate to accept our so-called charity. Many such a man would rather go hungry than eat our patronizing loaves. No wonder that poverty embitters and makes outcasts. The fellow who is "down and out" has nothing on

which he can rebegin. His rights have died in his misfortune. He may scarcely lay claim to the air he breathes. But in the case of the penniless Hebrew a certain residuary claim was guaranteed. He had an absolute right to the leavings of the harvest and the last clusters on the vine. Take the beautiful story of Ruth, gleaning with her kinswoman behind the reapers. There is no suggestion of cringing or shame in her demeanor. She was still woman enough to become queen. The gleanings belonged to her by decree both human and divine. God says that they belong to her always. Part of the prosperity of the fortunate belongs, as a vested right, to the unfortunate. Because such an one is poor he has claim indefeasible. The corners of our vineyards are not truly ours. The last cluster of our vines can never, honorably, be counted among our possessions. They belong to the man who needs them more than we.

I could name a prominent man who puts aside a generous portion of each month's income to be used in the name of

religion and charity. Nor does he borrow it back the next month to apply to business concerns. In fact, he declares he would as soon think of putting his hand in his neighbor's pocket as of touching, for personal purposes, a penny of that separated portion. It is not his, he declares. It is the overplus of God's bounty; the corner of the harvest field which he may not reap. It is God's portion of the man's prosperity, and the owner holds it ready for any needy applicant, for any beautiful and worthy use. Nor does he count it generosity to reserve this portion of his means. Generosity only begins, according to his noble creed, when he cuts into his own portion. This special portion is not his. And, with a magnanimity and courtliness as rare as they are beautiful, he seeks to make his beneficiaries feel that they are entitled to all he bestows. According to his creed, the unfortunate are entirely within their rights when they accept his bounty. All of which, I suppose, has the smack of legalism. It comes dangerously near the

ancient tithing system whose iron-clad rule is so righteously repudiated by modern men. But I submit that it is immeasurably more Christian than the gingerly dole of ordinary charity. Only by the adoption of some such principle of giving are we ever likely to know the blessedness of giving. It is high time that we Christians gave over our practice of self-gratulation on the generosity of our dealings with the poor. Let us, rather, count that a portion of our prosperity belongs to our needier brothers. It is not our own. According to the high doctrine of the Scripture, it has never been ours. To use it for others is merely to act as administrator of the property of others—a trustee who is not required to give bonds except to God.

What a long way some such principle, in practical operation, would take us toward the solution of the much-vexed labor problem! Boiled down to its ultimate essence, the demand of the laboring classes is for a sort of partnership, a fair participation in the profits of business. Is

the demand unwarranted or inequitable? By what sort of logic can it be argued that the undivided profits of a given enterprise shall be awarded to the Captains of Industry? Let us suppose a case. A manufacturer invests a hundred thousand dollars of capital in plant and raw material; his employees invest an equivalent amount in brawn and technical skill. They get their living in the form of wages; the employer takes his in the form of salary. But there is something left—the profits of the enterprise. And these, according to the usual division of advantage, are appropriated by the employer. But by what just right? If our scripture contains a truth for human life, some part of the profits of the concern belong to the army of labor. Such portion ought to be sacred to the “unfittest” in the struggle. And some day he will get it.

The world moves that way. The wave which, in the face of a tidal drift to his opponent, swept into office the present Governor of Massachusetts, gathered momentum in the popular knowledge that

W. L. Douglas had adopted the coöperative principle in his great factories. Certain of the most successful firms of New York city have tried one form or another of profit sharing with their employees. In some cases the plan has failed; in the larger number it has famously won. It is not for me to affirm that such a principle would solve all the snarls of modern industrial conditions. I believe, however, that the widespread adoption of such practice would go a great length toward abating the fierceness of the present contest between labor and capital. In the long run, and in the majority of cases, I believe it would be economically justified in returns. But the prime consideration just here is not an economic one: it is the righteousness of the idea. It may be that all our lower courts will long continue to secure to capital the undivided profits of an enterprise. But there is another Court and a higher. Its decision will, some day, be handed down and become part of the law of mankind. This Higher Court of human equity declares that part of the

rich man's riches, part of the capitalist's capital, part of the employer's profits belongs not to himself, but to his humblest coöperatives in toil.

But see how this suggestion applies, also, to a man's disposition of his time. What is Sunday but the corner we are forbidden to reap, the cluster of hours we are commanded to leave? Sunday is the portion of the week which belongs not to man, but to God; not to ordinary business, but to the noble uses of manhood; not to material gains, but to the growth of the souls of men. Just so long as a man figures that his days are all his own he may treat Sunday grudgingly. He may probably give as little of his time as possible, and sneak out any convenient portion to the purposes of business. And when his pilfering of sacred hours is done he will probably call upon the Lord to be grateful for the bones of worship thrown to Him. I know a host of men who, Sunday morning, get out the hammer and screwdriver for a season of general tinkering, or take part of the day to balance

up the books and plan the business of the week ahead. They confidently reckon that the hours thus taken from the Rest Day represent hours gained. Alas! they are not gained. They are merely stolen, for they do not belong to the man who takes them.

I have not forgotten what some of you would like to remind me of, that "the Sabbath was made for man." I remember it distinctly. And it is partly upon what Jesus said that I base this argument. He declared, "The Sabbath was made for man." Not for commerce; not for business; not for gain: "the Sabbath was made for *man*." In other words, it was designed to keep him a man. It was to foster those rarer qualities which belong to manhood. Sunday gives a chance for an opening of windows and the "lifting of eyes unto the hills." It offers opportunity for a man to get acquainted with himself and his Maker. It would help save him from becoming a machine. When the returns are finally made up it will appear that humanity has done noth-

ing but lose by attempting to appropriate this corner of the harvest of the days.

Following the thought a little further, I may say that Sunday is the hint of some other corners of time we should be wise to leave unreaped. One of the cruelest features of our commercial age is its robbery of family life. The business devotee counts it a kind of virtue that he has never an hour for the home circle. God forgive him! Part of his time belongs, by every sacred title, to the woman whose love he sought and whose life is linked with his. The children whom he has brought into the world and who, in too many instances, know him only as "the man who goes downtown," have a claim upon his time. He owes hours to his friends; he owes time to the poor. To these "hours apart" we have no right. They are the last clusters, the corners of the harvest, reserved by God for the use of others. It is sheer robbery to touch them.

As with money and time, so with life and its powers. No man is at liberty to

cultivate the acres of personal development for his exclusive use. In every gift and its legitimate harvest God reserves a right. Part of the benefit belongs to mankind. Even our patent laws make a sort of recognition of this claim. Framed as they have been to foster invention by assuring to the inventor the fruit of it, they yet admit that the whole stake is not his. Only for a limited term of years can he appropriate all the benefit to himself. After this stated time the invention belongs to mankind.

Modern medicine, with all its cocksureness and blunders, contains a beautiful ethic. It will admit to its reputable fellowship no practitioner who makes a secret of his particular discovery. The sentiment of the profession at large denies any one member the privilege of using a secret to his sole advantage. He must publish it to the world. He must give his new wisdom to mankind. Otherwise he is tabooed, and his name is spelled "quack." Whatever be its original intention, the practice is a beautiful illus-

tration of the too tardily dawning truth of the unreaped corners.

Life must henceforth move in that direction. The Supreme Court of Man denies the individual's undivided right to his own growth and the benefits thereof. To train one's mind for purely personal advantage; to cultivate scholarship as a personal luxury; to go to college or to travel the world over merely for personal enrichment is a frank mark of barbarism. The race has a vested interest in our individual acquirements. Whatever our personal graces or powers, we may claim the middle of the field; but the corners and the last clusters belong to the world outside. "Ye are not your own": *not all*. We are "debtor," according to Saint Paul, not only to those from whom we have received advantage, but to those in comparison with whom we possess superior advantage. In so far as we are strong we are "debtor" to help the weak. He who needs us has a valid claim against us. And in the Court of Last Resort it will be awarded to him.

XIV
THE PARAMOUNT DUTY

Master, what shall I do? . . . *This* do, and thou shalt live.—Luke x, 25, 28.

THE PARAMOUNT DUTY

WHAT lay back of this lawyer's question we cannot now determine. It may have been entirely sincere. Even a lawyer may ask an ingenuous question. He is not always cross-examining a witness or trying to score a point with the jury. He may sometimes show his real hand and speak out his heart. So it may be that this questioner's soul burned in the fever of his inquiry.

Or, suppose, on his part, the opposite mood. Mankind has grown suspicious of lawyers. The legal mind is commonly accounted "past finding out." Let it be granted that this attorney came to Jesus purely for the sake of an argument, in a spirit entirely captious and critical; that he sought opportunity only for intellectual gymnastics, an occasion to whet his controversial sword. Admit all these obvious faults, and the presumptive unworthiness with which centuries of commentators have invested him—what then? He who came to sneer may have departed to pray.

Many an incautious seeker has found more than he really sought. The light of conviction has broken in upon men who were not even honest in their doubts. Paul was never more furious against Jesus than on the day of his conversion. More than one scoffer has gone to church to ridicule his wife's religion and has gone home to beseech his wife's God for mercy. One of the most remarkable preachers of early Methodism was converted at a meeting which he attended solely for the purpose of breaking it up. He meant to drive out the preacher, but the truth hooked in his soul. Contest against truth is never hopeful. The keenest blade is soft metal against the "sword of the Spirit." God is a terrible antagonist. So, however bitter or cynical the spirit of this lawyer may have been, I am confident he carried away in his soul the barb of conviction.

But, as matter of fact, this ancient lawyer was probably neither entirely dishonest nor altogether sincere. Few of us are. The separation of humanity into

"sheep and goats" is a matter for the future. No such division is possible here. The hardest task mortal ever had set before him is the task of separating the good from the bad. Jesus declined even to make the attempt. "Let both grow together until the harvest." The reason is very obvious. Each soul is a compound of strength and weakness. Your saint is not all sanctity. Your sinner is not all evil. Goodness and badness are pretty thoroughly mixed in our make-up. The purest motive may be suspected of base alloy and the bitterest mood may break off into startling sweetness. Jekyll and Hyde, Paul and Nero are forever struggling for mastery in the best of us and in the worst of us. It is but a single step from virtue to villainy and the reverse; else nobody would ever backslide and no vagabond would ever be reclaimed.

So with this cross-examiner of Jesus. His was undoubtedly a case of mixed motives. He came to argue, yet beneath his itching for debate lay, very probably, an eagerness to know the truth. The very

fact that during the progress of the argument he sought to justify his conduct was itself confession of conscious fault. He made a great show of rhetoric and learning, but he was really hungry for the "bread of life." He ventured his question as Benjamin Franklin sent up his kite, quite uncertain what would be the result, whether a bolt to kill him or a flash to illuminate his path. I doubt, indeed, if he knew just what he wanted. Half serious and half flippant; proud of his record and yet querying sometimes how much there was in it to make him proud; sick of miserable sophistries while still making use of them; craving help and ashamed to admit it; asking what he did not really want—such was this lawyer's mood.

Of just such complex moods are we. As such must our friends accept us and God have patience with us. What prompted the tossing of a dime or quarter into that beggar's palm? Was it sincere pity for his distress? Or did it seem the most expeditious means of getting rid

of him? Or was the alms intended as a sort of salve to conscience? God knows! Most of our motives are mixed. They hopelessly defy analysis.

What motive inspired the gift of flowers to yon sick room or house of mourning? It was a beautiful thing to do. But what really prompted the doing of it? Was it a desire to carry sunshine into one of life's dark corners? Was it truly that and that only? Was there no thought of keeping up one's reputation for thoughtfulness? Would you have sent the flowers if you had not feared somebody else would do it and thus you be discredited? Such was not the whole motive, of course. I would cast no such aspersions upon our softer moods. I only ask concerning the relative proportions of pity and pride, of selfishness and unselfishness.

The papers keep faithful tally of the millions bestowed by Carnegie. The total is superb. We shall hardly overpraise. But what is the deep motive of all his princely giving? I mean the whole

motive. I doubt if Carnegie himself could tell. He unquestionably hates ignorance and believes that a better day will dawn with more widespread education. He has put a cash premium on certain heroic acts, and offered fresh incentive to professional devotion. But how many hungry mouths might have been filled, and how many coatless backs might go warm next winter on one tenth of Carnegie's gifts to education? The computation would be interesting at least. Is this princely giver so deeply sorry for a sad humanity? Or does he enjoy the building of his monument during his own life? Or is he chiefly, as has been said, ashamed to die possessed of so much property? Which? And how much of each? I wonder if he could tell?

A man mends his life and unites with the church. Nearly everyone admits the wisdom and significance of such a step. But what is its real significance? The act does not sufficiently explain itself. It may simply mean that a soul is disgusted with going dirty; or it may signify a deep

yearning for readjustment with the universe. It may indicate a sense of the indecency of continued ingratitude; or it may simply express a fear of the consequences of evil. Which? Never mind for the moment what motive *predominates*. Is the motive ever simple or unentangled? I do not believe it is. We are creatures of mixed motives. If our friends continue to trust us and if God bears with us, it must be with our complex moods.

But the lawyer's question: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It is not important to the present purpose whether the question was honest or dishonest. It may have been either or both. The point interesting us just now is its characteristic quality, its catholicity. It has been asked in every language, under every sky, in every age. It has been asked in the frenzy of remorse, in the quiet of meditation, and under the study lamp. Men will never have done asking it. It stands for the push of the soul out into the regions of infinite possibility. O, this restless, in-

quiring, passionate human soul! It will never be still. It never can be forced to be still. It was born for great flights, and it will never rest until attainment or annihilation is reached.

The soul's restlessness has given birth to all progress and achievement. By the eternal seethe of the human spirit we have grown wise and civilized and kind. Robins build their nests the same now as in the days of Noah. Bees and ants knew as much ten thousand years ago as they do to-day. They have not improved their skill or status. Who ever heard of a dog's lying awake nights trying to be a better dog, or craving to attain some new mastery? But man—you have a line to measure his grade in creation by the unrest, by the depths of remorse, by the incessant yearnings of his spirit. Ever thrusting forward some new inquiry, trying to make more of himself, marching to the conquest of unexplored territory—such is man.

What was it that drove David Livingstone into the Dark Continent and gave

us a new geography of Africa? We may not answer lightly. It was not the quest of glory or the command of religion that led him to Africa; it was that marvelous impulse which is part of man, the impulse of inquiry and conquest. Man, because he is man, cannot be quiet with unexplored or unclaimed continents in sight. The quest of the North Pole is another instance. Fortunes and lives have been the dedication. And this in a practical, commercial age. Hard-headed millionaires have fitted out such expeditions at their own expense. Yet modern science admits that, if men ever reach the North Pole, there will be little to find. Except for marks on the chart or the grouping of the stars, the searchers will probably not know when they have found it. There are no mines to work, no lands to annex, no habitats for humankind. Yet ship after ship turns its prow toward that inhospitable region. Peary comes back only to renew the quest later. Or a vessel is lost and two take its place. What does it mean? What, except that the restless,

eager, hungry human soul cannot settle down until it has reached the inaccessible? This is also the day of airships. Excellent brains have been dedicated to the perfecting of a machine which shall navigate the air. Santos-Dumont is only one of a considerable company. Man is not content with the practical annihilation of terrestrial distances. It suffices not that he has mastered the ocean, sending forty-thousand-ton leviathans of steel plowing its billows. All such past conquest serves only to make the human spirit resentful that the open spaces of the air should be still unconquered. That vast reach of blue—men must get up into it somehow!

Ah, but these are only examples of the "spirit in man"; only types of greater and diviner quests. As men have plunged into Dark Continents and sought the Pole, as they have dared reach up into the untraversed air, so have they yearned and strained in realms of moral and religious life. It may be that the conquest of the "dark continent" of one's self is not worth while. Modern pessimism says definitely

such is the case. Yet an innumerable company persist in trying. It may be there is no real polar circle of life and destiny—no God to search for. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” And modern materialism applauds the wisdom of the “fool.” Yet there is no quest like the quest of God, none so imperious, none so fresh. The seekers after God have been an innumerable company. “Man is incurably religious.” He keeps moving that way. And when baffled he builds “an altar to the unknown God” and worships there. And the flight of immortality? Man blindly believes in the open spaces of life. He yearns to “send his soul through the invisible.” He protests hotly against any denial of the reality of that realm. With Browning he confesses, in his best mood, “Faith is my waking life.”

“I see my way, as birds their trackless way,
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not. But unless God send His hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive;
He guides me and the bird. In His good time!”

I speak of these things because they are part of the heart's language. They are phrases from universal life. I believe that no man was ever yet happy in doing wrong. Sin simply drugs him; administers an anæsthetic. He cannot stay asleep, and the waking is horrible. The longing to be good, the pathos of remorse, "the hungering and thirsting after righteousness," the everlasting quest of the Father—these are moods familiar to all of us. No wonder that even John Fiske dedicated a chapter to the "everlasting reality of religion." We instinctively follow any leader who promises certainty in religion. Any charlatan who appeals to the religious instincts is sure of a following. Man is not so *intentionally* as he is *inescapably* religious. Fiske says that the cat's whiskers plainly argue an objective universe. There would be no good reason for an equipment of such whiskers unless there were a real world to brush against and from whose dangers to be protected. And these inward protests against deformity of spirit; these

outreachings of our better selves; these pitiful, insistent cries for God; these demands for eternal years for our growth—can these mean nothing?

But now for the answer to the lawyer's question. Jesus answered him, Yankee fashion, by asking another question: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" And when the lawyer replied with a quotation from the Mosaic law Jesus rejoined, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer needed no new commandment; he needed only to obey those commandments with which he was already familiar. A considerable disturbance in religious circles has been created by the allegation that the Ten Commandments were not original with Moses, nor received in the generally accepted Biblical style. Suppose they were not original on that occasion? What of it? The all-important thing about the Ten Commandments is not that they are exclusive, but that they are true; not that they were printed first by God's finger on stone, but that they are

written on the universal heart of man. The fact is men cannot get away from them nor tear them out. They are grained in the fibers of humanity.

The greatest thing in the world is to obey the heavenly voices which have already spoken. We are in small need of additional revelations; there is immense need of being true to revelations already received. How much light does a man require to get to heaven? "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The query is an old one, and the answer is the same for every age. *Man needs just what light he has.* Any light will suffice for a beginning. He who uses the light he already has is certain to get more. A man knows what honesty is: let him begin with that. He has some appreciation of the value of kindness: let him begin to be religious by being kind. He accepts God after a fashion: let him be sincere, then, after that fashion. "What is written in the law? "This do, and . . . live"!

XV

THE DIVINE DEPENDENCE

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. . . .
Loose him, and let him go.—John xi, 39, 44.

THE DIVINE DEPENDENCE

LAZARUS, restored, was indebted to more than One. That he recognized such further obligation is, however, not so certain. One Supreme Figure filled his vision. Like a group of other disciples later, he "saw Jesus only." In his eagerness to yield full honor to his Saviour, he probably did what twenty centuries of readers have continued to do—ignored the group of neighbors who participated in the miracle of restoration. Yet Jesus Himself would have been the last to ignore such helpers. He was the most generous of Masters. None so alert as He to recognize and reward any sort of coöperation. And these unnamed bystanders had played no insignificant part in the miracle of Lazarus's restoration. For it was they who had executed the divine command to "take away the stone." Nor let it captiously be said that a single word from Jesus's lips would have substituted for that particular human labor. The fact remains that this notable miracle waited

until human hands had done their full and reasonable part by removing the stone from the sepulcher. And after Lazarus had emerged from the shadows, it was these same neighbors who, in obedience to a further word from Jesus, stripped away the grave wrappings and set him free.

Was it an insignificant part they played? Relatively, yes. Yet it also appears that not until the stone was taken away by human hands did the miracle begin. And only when the enswathing bands were loosed, also by human hands, was the miracle complete. In other words, the preparation and completing of this miracle were left to human hands. These neighbors of the Bethany household, uncelebrated and unsung, were permitted to be partners with Jesus in one of the supreme acts of His ministry. They helped restore their friend. They coöperated with God. Who shall differentiate the degrees of credit? The essential and the unessential, who shall distinguish perfectly?

Who can ever do it? Even in the most familiar operations of ordinary life, the unnamed groups of helpers are always present. The merchant, for example, arrives at his office in the morning to find the floor swept, the wastebasket empty, and the inkwell filled. Shelves have been rearranged and counters are in order. In short, the machinery is ready for his word. He speaks, and the commercial wheels begin to move. He might speak in vain, however, but for the advance labors of his subordinates. Clerks and cleaners rose at daybreak to prepare for his business day. And it requires another set of subordinates to make his business decree effective. A stenographer to take his dictation, a salesman to execute his orders, and a truckman to handle his goods—these, according to the regime of modern business, are absolutely necessary. The merchant who attempts to dispense with such help, and to “do it all” himself, is only a petty merchant. Who shall say, then, that the help of these helpers is unessential?

See this truth in another field. The preliminaries to an operation are all attended to before the surgeon arrives. The instruments are rendered antiseptic, the patient is bathed and the anæsthetic administered. In short, the whole situation is prepared for the operative surgeon's work. He comes, and after a few minutes of skillful carving is gone. But the miracle of healing is not yet by any means complete. Days of careful nursing, and long vigils of watching; the dressing of the wound and the feeding of the patient—shall any one or all these be counted unessential? Let them be neglected, and few patients would recover to praise the great surgeon's skill.

Or take some famous court case, conducted by a Choate or Evarts. The case is his, yet it is not he who collects the evidence and arranges the papers and primes the witnesses. He who should so attempt would not be Choate, but some pettifogger at a thousand a year. A hundred preliminaries are arranged without even the express notice of the chief coun-

sel. The stone is rolled back by other hands. Everything that can be done by subordinates must be done by them. All is now ready for the great advocate to come and speak the vitalizing word which shall set the prisoner free. And when, at length, the decisive word is spoken, is the miracle of human eloquence complete? Not yet. Various legal functions must yet be observed. The judge's charge, the deliberation of the jury, the exchange of court formalities, the signing of various papers—all these are parts of the process which looks to the ultimate release of the accused. In full view of all which, who shall say what is essential and what is not?

Who shall ever confidently say? Who shall attempt to dispense with the functions of the helpers in life? who be so stupid as to cast discredit on the humblest coöperation of lowliest toilers? Whether it be the conducting of modern business, the performing of a delicate operation, or the completing of a legal case; whether it be the gathering of a harvest, the train-

ing of a child, or the saving of a soul, who shall venture to leave out of account the unnamed coadjutors? Let our scripture reëmphasize this needed lesson. Let these obscure and oft-forgotten helpers of Jesus warn and comfort us afresh.

Our partnerships with God—we shall hardly overstate their dignity and value. That we need God is scarcely more emphasized than that God needs us. Countless divine labors wait the evidence of human coöperation. To human address and skill is left the preparation and perfecting of many a modern miracle. This familiar Bethany scene is continually reproduced, and the human part is as much worth while as the divine. Let it be granted that without the presence of Christ all the eager labors of these friends—the removal of the stone, the stripping of the bandages—were “love’s labor lost.” We should also remember that but for the presence of these human helpers the miracle itself might never have been performed. At any rate, we do well to emphasize the divine reliance upon us. Not

for a moment forgetting the necessity of the divine word, nor yet ignoring the mysterious element which must be added to our toil before it becomes success; remembering that Lazarus never stirred in his grave until God had said, "Come forth," let us nevertheless give due honor to human coöperation. Who shall say what miracles of healing and emancipation remain unperformed simply because we have been unwilling and unprepared?

The divine dependence upon human coöperation—how clear it is in the life of Christ! He was not more truly Son of God than Son of Mary. They were human feet, oft tired and travel-stained, which carried Him about His "Father's business" through Palestine. He proclaimed His heavenly message in phrases learned at His mother's knee. Peter's fishing boat made Him a pulpit. Not until the few inadequate loaves were in His hands did Jesus begin to provide for the multitude. On the back of a borrowed beast He made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. And in the terrible

walk to Golgotha, as Jesus reeled from the accumulated agony of the days, other shoulders bore His cross. At every point He emphasized His need of human coöperation. In several instances He confessed that for lack of human support His hands were tied. And in two distinct cases the records read, "He could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief." All of which is a revelation of the Father. This tender scene at Bethany teaches no isolated lesson. It is a transcript of the very life and economy of God. As truly as some great bridge waits on paper for the assembling of the caisson builders and metal workers; as the Marconi invention still waits a more perfect mechanical adjustment of detail, so the work of God forever waits human partnership and enterprise.

Let me phrase this truth in some of its most obvious applications. According to recent predictions of the Agricultural Bureau at Washington, the wheat crop of 1905 is likely to be unprecedently rich. But what does that vast prospective har-

vest involve? Chiefly the assiduous, believing labor of a host of farmers. Not to the weather belongs the credit. The most favorable weather conditions alone would have tempted those Western acres to little display of their power. The government estimate of harvest is based upon the coöperation of the human toilers with sun and shower and soil. Only through human instrumentality will the huge wheat crop feed the world. The preparation and completion of the miracle of harvest are intrusted to human hands. The taking away of the stone, the loosing and letting go, are human prerogatives and obligations.

See how this same truth is written in the story of the Pilgrims. God had a great word for the Pilgrim Fathers. He spoke as He had not often spoken to mankind. He accorded them an honor such as has been rarely granted to mankind. He set them forth as a beacon to coming ages. To have been one of that little company will some day be accounted greater glory than to have engineered the

Steel Trust, or invented wireless telegraphy. Centuries yet will be required for a just computation of the world's debt to the Pilgrim Fathers. But let it never be forgotten that the Pilgrims had not only a great word *from God*; they offered *to God* a tremendous coöperation. Their ancestry and training were preparation for God to speak—the taking away of the stone. And when He had spoken His vitalizing word, they made that word effective by carrying it to a new continent. The miracle was indeed divine. The honor of preparing for and perfecting it belonged to man.

Or see this truth in any notable reform movement, such as emancipation. It was a divine word that called the black man from his prison. Yet the preparation was obviously human. Vast walls of prejudice and apathy had first to be rolled away. The process which led to negro emancipation was long and terrible. And now, since the liberating word has been spoken, is the miracle complete? After the passage of forty years, what shall we

say? Is the black man really free? It is as if the miracle at Bethany had ended with Lazarus bound. In our modern instance there is still somewhat for human hands to do. We must "loose and let go." Just what that means; whether greater liberties or less; whether it stands for the Northern or Southern method of dealing with the black man, I do not assume to say. I simply call attention to the fact that this modern miracle of emancipation is incomplete. The African Lazarus has been "called forth," but is still bound. We must perfect the work of freedom. And we owe respectful consideration, at least, to men who like Theodore Roosevelt are earnestly endeavoring to complete emancipation.

How boldly written this same truth is in the history of every great revival! Every such movement and each personal instance of conversion is an answer to the divine summons to "come forth." Nothing is more certain than that in all such matters we are in the presence of powers beyond human analysis or ken. We must

reckon with elements vastly mysterious but deeply real. So many unchurched scientists confess. But every revival of religion has its human preparation and perfecting. I doubt if any such movement was ever born without human parents. To us men is accorded the honor of taking away the stone; of taking up "the stumbling-blocks out of the way." And in the persistent prayers of some group of burdened believers; in the silent, sacrificing faith of some inconspicuous church members; in the travail of some bedridden Christian whose prayer list was kept under the pillow, is the human preparation for the religious awakening which startles a whole community. And in the rousing of a church from its lethargy; in the solicitude of fathers and mothers for their children, of friend for friend; in the enlistment of new recruits for the Lord's army, may be found the casting aside of grave wrappings and the completion of God's miracle of grace.

Personal life also shows the reading of this truth. The supreme hope concern-

ing any man is that some day God will speak to him. In fact, the real man is unawakened until God does speak to him. No soul ever found its unique place in the world until it was appointed of God. Up to that great moment folks are simply "getting ready." Yet this does by no means minify the value of human preparation. God cannot speak a large message to a small soul. It needs a Pauline gift and a Pauline devotion in order to achieve a Pauline labor. God built Saint Augustine on Monica's foundation. Nancy Hanks helped to get Lincoln ready for God to speak to him and through him. All sorts of hardships and travail belong to the process of training souls to hear what God has to say. And after God speaks, man must perfect. The obedience of every human power; a levy upon all personal resource; the allegiance of all loyalty—these complete and make effective God's miracle. He who has seen must be "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

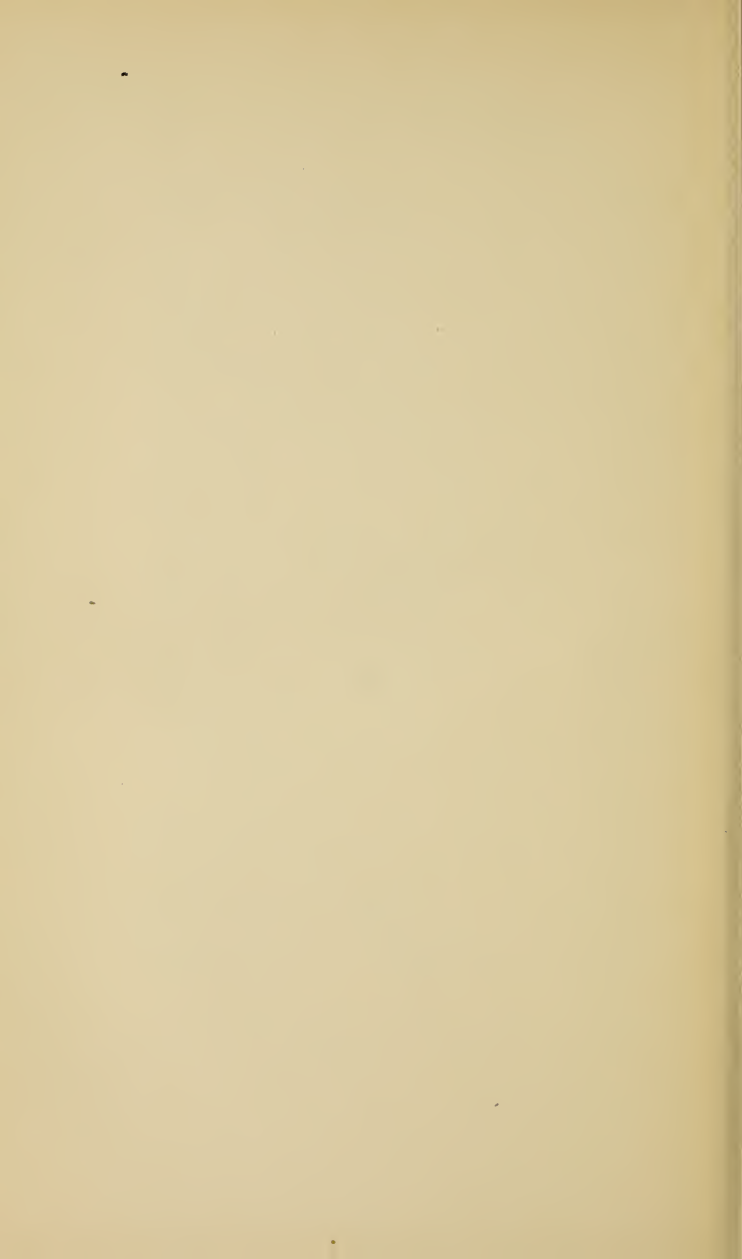
Through all of which meditation three

thoughts flash out for daily life. The first is an explanation of many of our failures. Too many of us have weakly waited for God to accomplish the work of His sovereign will. Hands that should have been busy have hung down inertly. But according to a principle of the divine economy God does nothing for man which man is able to do for himself. God adds power to our fidelity; He never substitutes for our fidelity. Till we have striven we have no right to expect a display of divine energy. "Bring ye all the tithes . . . and prove me." There is no proving, however, until after the "bringing of the tithes."

This old picture teaches vividly, also, the ground of human confidence in results. After the stone is taken away God speaks. No brave hands ever yet toiled in vain. "Love's labor" is not "lost." "He is faithful that promised." God summons us to no task but He means to crown with success.

Here is also the supreme honor of our vocation. "We are laborers together with

God." Not in the rifling of the tomb, but in the infinitely greater work of helping dead lives to their resurrection, we are partners with the Father of Spirits. What incentive to tireless zeal! I recall a young fellow whose first employment was in the office of "Standard Oil." The position was menial, but the lad's carriage took on new importance. He was fairly bursting with pride. To be associated with the kings of modern finance, in however humble relationship, made his task seem mere play. Was he not helping the alchemy of "Standard Oil"? The lad was right. Every subordinate shares in the honor of his chief. The humblest disciple of Jesus is partner in an enterprise as far above "Standard Oil" as the heavens are high above the earth. To be associates in a work of serving mankind; in alliance with the Power that makes for righteousness; coöperative in the redemption of the world—this, surely, is honor enough.





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